THE NEW REPUBLIC

ECEMBER 25, 2000

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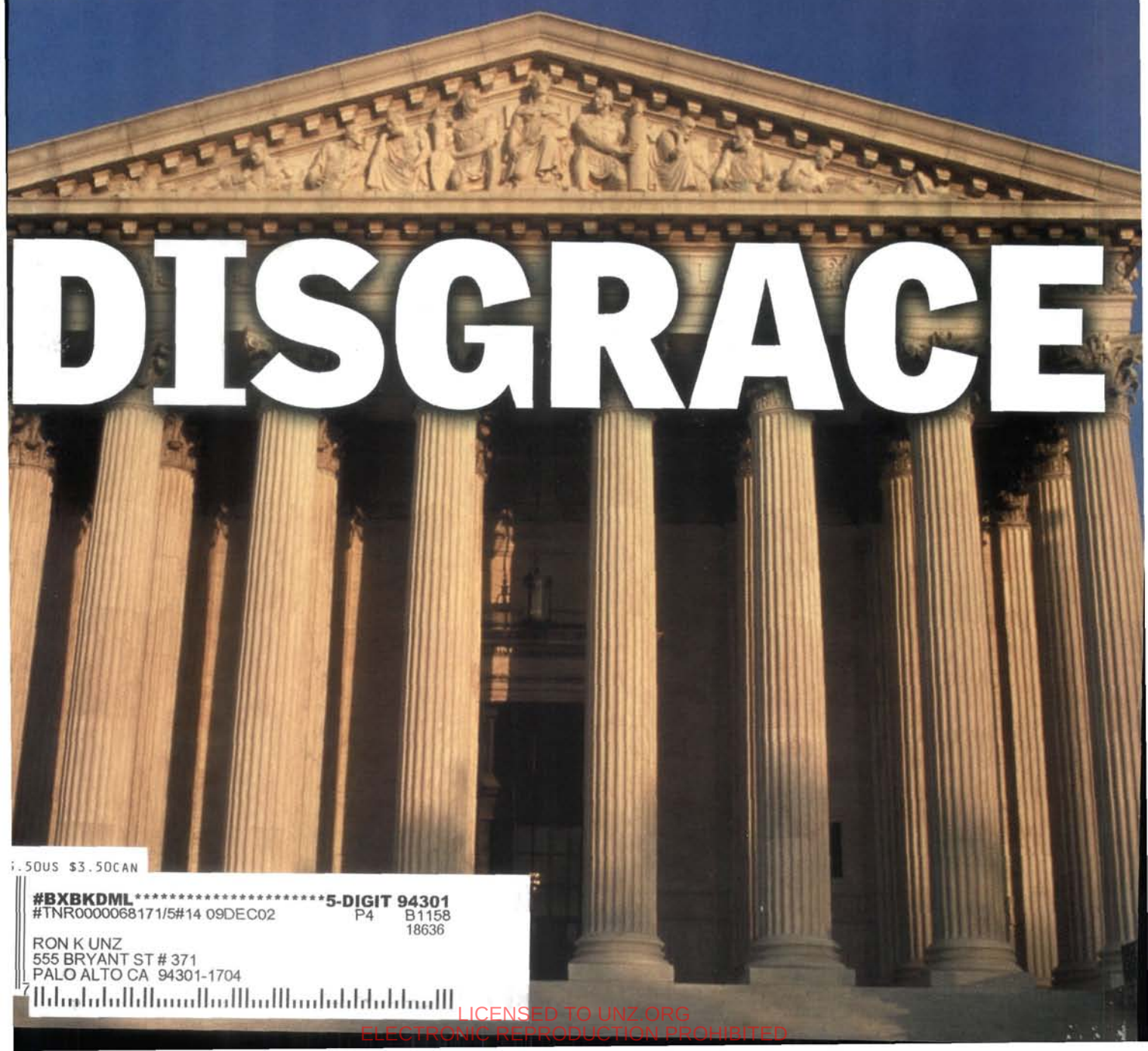

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Where We Stand

A commentary on public education and other critical issues

A Holiday Wish List

By SANDRA FELDMAN, President
American Federation of Teachers

As I write this, the holiday spirit reigns. The streets are filled with festive lights and evergreens; bell-ringing Santas are collecting money for charity; and the toys donated for poor children are being wrapped and distributed.

In the spirit of the holiday season, I suggest our elected officials and holders of the purse strings enact some concrete measures to improve the education of our poorest children, an accomplishment that will benefit all of America's youngsters.

Across the country this past November, the people voted to support public education by investing in smaller classes, higher standards, and better pay for teachers. While politicians may disagree on how to achieve these goals, there is broad consensus on some things that could and should be done. Here's my short holiday-season wish list:

First: high-quality, affordable preschool. This is available in every other advanced nation. Why? Because research makes it clear that children are eager learners from the first moments of their lives. They flourish when adults teach them and read to them, so preschool can make a big difference. In some families, parents can do it all. But today many children are in daycare starting in infancy, and it's important that high-quality preschool programs be widely available.

This is especially true for poor children, who often enter kindergarten far behind advantaged youngsters. In vocabulary acquisition alone, poor children are likely to start school knowing many fewer words than their more advantaged peers. We know that if poor children are able to attend quality preschools, that gap is much narrower when they enter kindergarten. But they need preschool learning environments suitable for young children, and teachers who are qualified early childhood specialists.

If other countries can do this—and do it successfully—why can't we?

Second: smaller classes. We also know—not just from common wisdom but from hard research—that all children benefit from being in smaller classes. This is especially true for poor children. Indeed, the evidence is crystal clear that the effects of small classes show up in higher achievement all the way to high school graduation. This is an investment we should make, starting with the early grades, where the payoff is greatest.

Let's give all of our children the gift of learning.

Third: a qualified teacher for every child. With over two million teachers needed in the next decade, that means ensuring competitive salaries, professional working conditions, and other incentives to attract and retain teachers and keep high standards for the profession. Schools and districts that serve poor children face a special challenge: They need the best-prepared teachers, and they are already experiencing severe shortages.

Teachers who are now in the classroom should get ongoing support—not be threatened with punitive measures. Summer institutes to upgrade skills and content knowledge and advanced courses in subject-matter fields—especially teaching reading, math, and science—should be provided. And new teachers should be well educated, with a major in a subject area—not just "education"—and should pass high-level entry examinations.

Fourth: more learning time for children who need it. There is accumulating research that after-school programs, summer school, and extended days and years enable children who are behind to catch up. And added academics are not enough. Poor children need the kinds of extras that advantaged children take for granted but that too many poor children don't get: sports and cultural activities—like singing in choirs, dancing, visiting museums—and going on organized excursions.

There is much more that could and should be done: upgrading the deplorable school buildings too many poor children attend; closing the digital divide; providing quality health care for children and families. But quality childcare and preschool, smaller classes, better-prepared teachers, and extra learning time for children who need it are a good place to start—all in the context of holding schools and educators and elected officials accountable for spending wisely and meeting standards.

As we celebrate this holiday season, let's take to heart the words of President Franklin Delano Roosevelt that are engraved on his memorial in Washington, D.C.: "The test of our progress is not whether we add more to the abundance of those who have much. It is whether we provide enough for those who have little." ∎

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THE NEW REPUBLIC

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American way

TO THE EDITORS:

As a lifelong subscriber to *National Review* and a mossbacked conservative, it isn't often that I agree with you. Your editorial in support of adhering to the Constitution as regards this presidential election, however, must go down as historic—a liberal espousal of following the Constitution even when it does not, on this particular day, grant your own hearts' desire ("?," November 20).

I've been asking my conservative buddies, "Is either one of these two candidates worth sacrificing the Constitution?" I can't tell you how much it angered me to hear Bill Daley's pious intonations about "the will of the people" should George W. Bush win in the electoral college but lose the popular vote. The Republican talking head who responded feebly to his assertions should have said, "There is only one reason 'the will of the people' is ever heard at all, and that is because the Constitution protects the people's right to speak, worship, vote, and do everything else we take for granted."

But "the will of the people" has yet to be determined. We still cannot discount the

possibility that absentee ballots will actually tilt the popular-vote total toward Bush; at any rate, 48.3 percent to 48.0 percent is a statistically insignificant difference, so, for all practical purposes, the candidates have tied in the popular vote. The percentages are totally irrelevant, anyway, since "the will of the people" for 200 years has affirmed and reaffirmed the Constitution, while Al Gore's razor-thin popular-vote advantage is "the will of the people" as expressed on one day in 2000.

On the other hand, I wish Bush had been more circumspect about his premature "planning" for his administration, and the lawsuit he filed to prevent a manual recount seemed to me to be without merit. Even so, you should be ashamed for the Democrats pushing to win at any cost. This is a very scary time, and we may yet see our Constitution perforated and hung up next to the toilet by these unconscionable bastards.

LEE DISE
Virginia Beach, Virginia

TO THE EDITORS:

If this election were decided by popular vote, what's now happening in Florida would be happening in all 50 states, as each party scrambled to pick up a dozen votes here, a dozen votes there, to try to make up the narrow national margin. There'd be charges of ballot irregularities from Salt Lake City to Providence, and it could take months to sort it all out.

The best solution, which will never be implemented, is to have a popular vote with a runoff election if no candidate gets 50 percent. The runoff would be administered by the Federal Election Commission, with the same, simple two-person ballot used across the country.

ROBERT DAVID SULLIVAN
Boston, Massachusetts

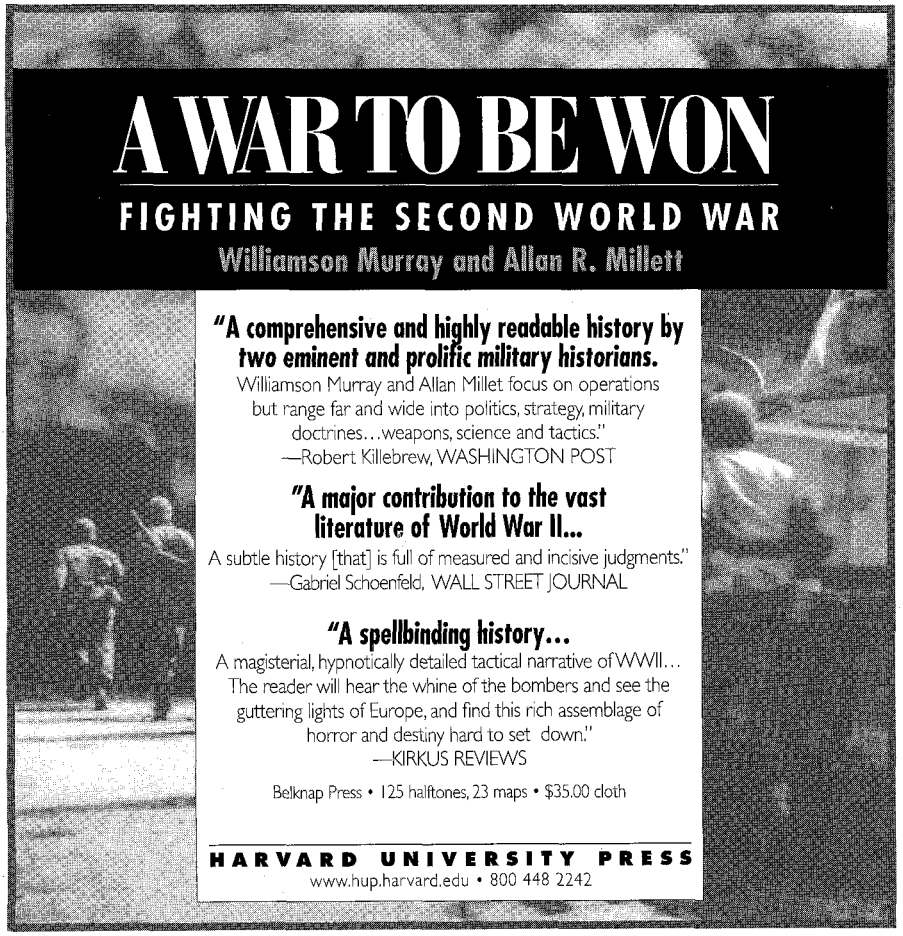
TO THE EDITORS:

You are pleased that Al Gore won the support of "a majority of the American people"? Let editorial discipline overcome wishful thinking: 48 percent is not a "majority," nor do those who voted in this election constitute "the American people." It's sobering, perhaps, but also salutary to be reminded that even the winners of our recent presidential elections command something far less than the support of the majority of Americans.

ALAN JACOBS
Wheaton, Illinois

TO THE EDITORS:

I am a longtime reader of THE NEW REPUBLIC and rely on it for intelligent analysis of politics and policy both at home and abroad. But the November 20 issue does not live up to your usual standards. Your editorial's implication that Ralph Nader is not part of the "American way" is disturbing. Whether you agree with him and his motives is moot. The "American way" is a participatory political process, and Nader furthered and expanded that tradition.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Furthermore, the theme throughout this issue—that Nader's candidacy cost Al Gore this election—is the result of lazy analysis. Did all of you forget that Gore managed to secure only 21 states, compared with Bush's 29? In a number of states that could have decided this election on November 7—including Ohio, West Virginia, Tennessee (Gore's home state), and Arkansas (Bill Clinton's home state)—Nader's vote totals were not enough to change the outcome. Focusing only on Florida, and Nader's impact there, is a disservice to your readers. I hope you will get back to your usual, high standards of analysis and scrutinize the campaign strategies that put Gore's candidacy in such a precarious position.

DAN DELANY
Chicago, Illinois

Defect

TO THE EDITORS:

In "Race Neutral" (November 20), Michael Crowley writes of Ralph Nader: "It was clear that the 97,000 votes he collected in Florida ... almost certainly included enough Gore defectors to prevent the vice president from winning the state." That clarity is unfortunately muddied by the exit polls available at CNN.com. Two percent of self-described Democrats voted for Nader, and so did 1 percent of Republicans. On the other hand, 11 percent of Democrats voted for George W. Bush, while only 8 percent of Republicans voted for Al Gore. Independents went strongly (6 percent) for Nader but were otherwise evenly split between Bush (47 percent) and Gore (45 percent). Granted that the exit poll is an imperfect sampling, it nonetheless suggests that Bush's votes included enough Gore defectors that the outcome would have been the same whether or not Nader was in the race.

ERIC ROSENBLOOM
Brooklyn, New York

Bellicose

TO THE EDITORS:

While properly critical of the volume as a whole, James Wood was perhaps a bit too charitable toward certain aspects of James Atlas's new biography of Saul Bellow ("Give All," November 13). Atlas strives to "unmask" Bellow both as a writer and a human being, suggesting that he is an inauthentic, deeply flawed individual, a self-promoter, and a womanizer. Atlas also devotes much space to the banal proposition (as if it were a profound discovery) that writers use their personal experiences in creating fiction, suggesting that in Bellow's case this is particularly disreputable.

Probing the motives of Bellow invites corresponding speculations about those of Atlas. His attempt to "deconstruct" Bellow may well be one of the many examples of greatness inspiring envy and resentment among the less talented, who strive all the more intensely (but without success) to attain the eminence possessed by the figures they seek to deflate.

PAUL HOLLANDER
Northampton, Massachusetts

Unchristian

TO THE EDITORS:

In the Notebook section of the November 20 issue, there is a cartoon showing Barbara Bush holding George W. in the pose of Michelangelo's Pietà. It is obvious that you could have made your point without insulting Christians. What's not so obvious is why you chose to do so anyway.

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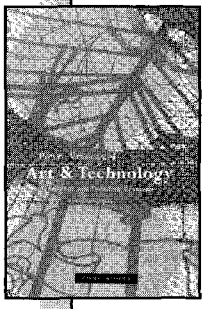

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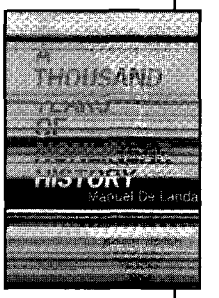

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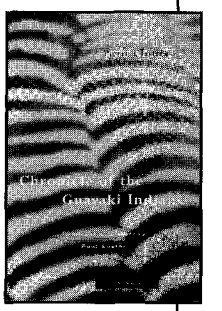

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TRB

FROM WASHINGTON

More Or Less

"DON'T JUST STAND there, do nothing" is not exactly a rallying cry for our times. This is a culture so saturated with activity that we barely sleep, scarcely read anything longer than a newspaper article, check our e-mail hourly. Our attention spans are minuscule, our lattes short and skim and on the run. But sometimes nothing is the best option. It allows time for reflection. Some problems even resolve themselves. At times, our instant solutions to problems turn out to be more trouble than the problems themselves. We're human, after all. We make mistakes. We need time and space to avoid them.

As with life, so with politics. In the wake of the Clinton era, we live, to borrow that horrific phrase, in a "permanent campaign." There are no time-outs. Candidates campaign the way hospital interns work—at all hours, on no sleep and wretched food. Watching Al Gore finish his campaign last month was like witnessing someone in an Ironman contest. It was exhausting even to watch. And then, after all the delirium of the actual race, we had another post-election bout of hyperactivity, this time in the judicial sphere: dozens of suits, countless rulings, heated rhetoric (mine included), bizarre contortions of logic and law. And where did we end up? Exactly where we started on election night—but with our institutions damaged and our confidence undermined.

The bottom line of the election in Florida is that it was a statistical tie. The margin of error in the voting machines was greater than the margin of victory for either candidate. A second machine recount—and a narrower margin of victory—only made that point even clearer. We can argue until we are blue in the face about who would have won if we could have found a perfect way of including every voter's intention in the final tally. (For what it's worth, I think Gore would have won in a Platonic, ideal election; but George W. Bush would have won in any real-world, practicable scenario.) But such options were not available to us in the time allotted with the machinery currently in place. We live in an imperfect world in which there is not a solution to every problem, a remedy for every wrong.

This, of course, is heresy in modern, rationalist America. We instinctively believe that someone really won and that every vote can always be counted. In Gore's mind, which is an almost perfect incarnation of the rationalist worldview, the truth was always out there, and there was a way to reach it. But this was a chimera. Even if we had climbed every mountain and counted every dimple, even if Gore had finally eked out a victory of a couple hundred dimpled votes on a third or fourth recount, he would have been no more legitimate than Bush is now. Those of us who don't think a dimple is a vote would have doubted Gore's claim to the White House. Others would have considered his victory more a function of the intent of the vote counters than a function of the intent of the voters. Others would have believed that the chaotic legal process by which such a result was reached rendered the outcome completely suspect. And none of these views would have been crazy. I understand why a candidate who came so close might not want to believe that a clear victory was impossible. But it was, and it is. For both candidates.

And, ironically, if Gore had made less of an effort to win, he might have had a better chance of actually doing so. If he had conceded that first night, his subsequent legal challenges would have seemed more noble and legitimate—and they would have had a greater chance of success. If he had called for manual recounts in every Florida county in the first days after the election rather than focusing initially on the counties where he thought he could harvest the most votes, a statewide hand recount might actually have taken place. Gore didn't need Bush to call for such recounts. He could have called for them himself, right away. But he didn't. He tried a clever strategy. And in the end it came back to bite him.

And imagine what might have happened if the Florida Supreme Court had not been so aggressive on Gore's behalf. In some respects, this post-election trauma represented both the triumph and the collapse of judicial activism. What mattered to the U.S. Supreme Court in the end was time and fair standards for a recount. Acceptable, uniform standards for a statewide recount were impossible to establish, given the varying types of voting machines in Florida and the discretion canvassing boards have in determining counting methods. But time was another matter. Gore supporters will no doubt assail the Supreme Court for cutting short the final recount last Saturday, thus essentially making a timely remedy impossible. But the real reason for the lack of time was that the Florida Supreme Court so messed up the post-election procedures that the clock was already running out on Gore long before the Supremes had a chance to intervene.

Cast your mind back for the last time to the Florida court's amazing shenanigans in the past month and you'll recall why. The judges started by upending a clear, legal recount deadline established before Election Day, effectively stripping Florida's secretary of state of any discretionary authority in executing her legal duty. They overruled one reasonable lower-court ruling to achieve this. They then made up a second, later deadline for manual recounts out of thin air and then overruled that deadline when it turned out to be too tight, and allowed election returns from partial recounts. They then overturned yet another reasonable lower-court ruling in the contest phase of the election, ignored a warning from the U.S. Supreme Court to get their house in order, and laid down—again out of thin air—a whole new recount procedure for the entire state, which, according to the Florida court's own chief justice, had "no foundation in the law of Florida as it existed on November 7, or at any time since the issuance of this opinion." If the Florida Supreme Court's behavior weren't so outrageous, it would be funny. But the bottom line is that, thanks to the court's haplessness, Gore had enough time neither for his first recount nor for a proper election contest. Sure, the Bush team stonewalled. But that's what lawyers do when they have a case going up against a strict time limit. The fact remains: If the Florida court had simply followed the law as it stood on November 7, Gore would have had far more time for a full manual recount, and one of Justice Antonin Scalia's critical arguments—that there was no time for a remedy—would have been moot.

Less, in other words, is often more. In many respects, this entire electoral ordeal has been a function of Gore's trying too hard. He should have done the simple things: run on his economic record, stuck to his New Democrat credentials, won his home state, conceded when he first lost, and followed the election rules in place on November 7. He did much more and ended up with much less. And the man who could barely string a sentence together, campaigned weakly, and retired to a ranch while Gore stayed surgically attached to his Palm Pilot won the prize. This will seem an irony to some, a lesson to others. Maybe Dubya was the truly smart one after all.

ANDREW SULLIVAN

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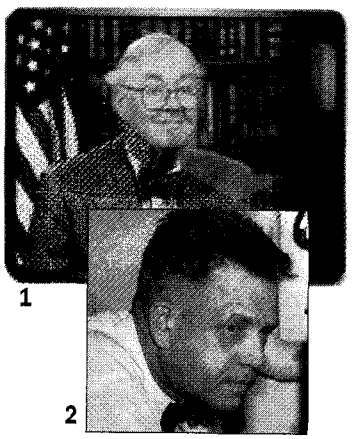

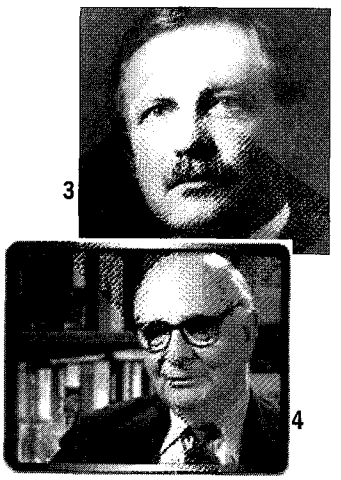

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Unsafe Harbor

HEALING? SURE. AMERICAN culture requires it, and so do the careers of American politicians. But healing is also a part of the strategy of the Republican larcenists, in and out of robes, who arranged to suppress the truth about the vote in Florida and thereby to make off with the election of 2000. Having satisfied their lower impulses, they are counting on us to act on our higher impulses, and to come together. Well, we cannot come together, at least not yet, because we have just been driven apart. The rupture is real, and it demands to be analyzed. After what happened at the Supreme Court on December 12, anger is a mark of analysis.

The casuistry of William Rehnquist, Antonin Scalia, Clarence Thomas, Sandra Day O'Connor, and Anthony Kennedy—this was a 5-4 decision, not a 7-2 decision, as some Republican spinners would have us believe, on the utterly false assumption that every justice who acknowledged the chaos in the standards of counting concurred in shutting the counting down—will be exposed by scholars of the law. We will leave it to them to demonstrate, for example, that the "safe harbor" provision in Florida law has no constitutional stature, that an extension of the deadline for a fair and methodologically consistent tally of all the votes of Florida would not have violated Article 2 of the Constitution. We insist instead that the election of the president of the United States by the Supreme Court of the United States needs to be regarded not only legally, but also morally and historically. And morally and historically speaking, we have witnessed an outrage.

The Orwellian character of the majority opinion in *Bush* v. *Gore* is plain from even a cursory reading. The justices cite precedents affirming "the one man, one vote basis of our representative government," and then they proceed to nullify the votes of thousands of men and women. They castigate the contest provision of the Florida Supreme Court for failing to "sustain the confidence that all citizens must have in the outcome of elections," and then they proceed to shatter the confidence that all citizens must have in the outcome of elections. They protest that "none are more conscious of the vital limits on judicial authority than are the members of this Court," and then they proceed to extend judicial authority into the very heart of American politics—an extension so vast and so unprecedented that it can only be described as un-American.

Are the justices, then, hypocrites? Alas, they are not. They are—*sub silentio*, as they might say—Republicans. This ruling was designed to bring about a political outcome, and it is an insult to the intelligence of the American people to suggest otherwise. There was a basis for the suspicion about the politicization of the Supreme Court already on December 9, in the startling decision to grant the stay that George W. Bush desperately needed. That decision was 5-4; and those who clung to the fine conviction that politics stopped at this chamber's door were hoping that the partisan split would not reproduce itself in *Bush* v. *Gore*, when the integrity of the American system of government hung in the balance. But it did. Not even O'Connor and Kennedy, the most illustrious open minds in America, opened their minds.

Dissolve to Philadelphia on July 25, 1787. On that Wednesday morning the Constitutional Convention took up the question of how the executive in the American republic was to be elected. In his notes on the debates, James Madison recorded his own opinion of the matter. "The election must be made either by some existing authority under the National or State constitutions—or by some special authority derived from the people—or by the people themselves. The two existing authorities under the National Constitution would be the Legislative & Judiciary. The latter he presumed was out of the question." It now appears that he should have made no such presumption. And so it will be that George W. Bush's presidency will forever be haunted by James Madison's ghost. Constitutionally speaking, this presidency is ill-gotten. It is the prize of a judicial putsch.

Needless to say, James Madison will not keep George W. Bush awake at night. But there is something else that should trouble the vacant and victorious man's sleep. There are all those sealed metal boxes in the Sunshine State, the ones upon which the Supreme Court does not want the sun to shine, the ones that hold the dimpled and undimpled instruments of the people's will. It is very likely that those ballot boxes contain an arithmetical secret that could cast doubt upon the legitimacy of his electoral success. After all, everything that Bush and his minders have said and done since November 7 has been premised on a terror of the contents of those boxes, a frantic fear of what they might reveal, which is that George W. Bush won the election but Al Gore won the vote. And the Supreme Court of the United States has made itself a party to this dread of the democratic truth.

We disrespectfully dissent. ■

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NOTEBOOK

RACE TO JUDGMENT: For a brief moment last week, it seemed the presidency might rest with Seminole County Judge Nikki Ann Clark. Clark was to rule on some 15,000 absentee ballots in her county, some of which had been obtained when GOP officials, in apparent violation of the law, corrected faulty applications by Republican voters. For some conservatives, Clark's impending decision was as apparent as the color of her skin. On *www.frontpagemag.com*, talk-show host Lowell Ponte called Clark the "Great Black Hope" and prophesied that the "arrogant African American Democrat" would throw out the ballots in order to "anoint" Al Gore. MSNBC blowhard Chris Matthews bellowed, "You've got a Florida court led by a black woman who basically says, 'It's going to be Gore.'" And *The Wall Street Journal*'s Paul Gigot suggested that Jesse Jackson had ensured a pro-Gore decision by visiting Clark's courtroom: "You can bet Judge Clark noticed who was watching her from the gallery." Even the fact that Clark's sister had worked in Bush senior's administration could not shake the pundits' certainty that pigment was destiny. And we thought conservatives didn't believe in classifying people by race! In fact, of course, Clark sided with the Republicans, deciding not to throw out any of the disputed ballots. Ponte, Matthews, and Gigot can mail her their apologies care of the Leon County Courthouse, Tallahassee, Florida.

YOU TOO?: "We're going into uncharted waters, and this could easily end up in our Supreme Court."—Former Israeli Ambassador to the United Nations Dore Gold, on Ehud Barak's invocation of a controversial law calling for new elections, *The New York Times*, December 10

LEFT AT SEA: Three years ago, Eric Alterman wrote an article for *The Nation* lampooning the garish excesses of a *National Review*-sponsored cruise. The cruise ship, the M.S. *Ryndam*, was "a vessel the size of Times Square." Worse, "[w]ith a staff-to-passenger ratio of roughly one-to-two, it is a challenge to do anything for yourself on this boat outside the bathroom. In the all-you-can-eat dining room, there is a man who stands by the coffee dispenser so you don't have to move the lever up and down with your index finger.... Any self-respecting liberal would feel guilty being so well served by so many apparent Third Worlders." Well, almost any self-respecting liberal. Last week, *The New York Times* described another cruise on the M.S. *Ryndam*, this one sponsored by—you guessed it—*The Nation*. Tom Hayden, Patricia J. Williams, Molly Ivins, and other self-appointed champions of the oppressed held forth "on a stage flanked by 12-foot-tall glass and metal tulips, in front of a swaying sequined curtain better suited to a Las Vegas floor show." *Nation* subscribers able to afford the fare (between $1,900 and $2,900) enjoyed the shipboard casino, 24-hour room service, and a daily lecture on "cigar appreciation." Guests could even pick up a *Nation* platinum Visa card. Sure, there were gripes during the global-warming panel about burning all that petroleum at sea. And, yes, guests complained that the ship's employees weren't unionized. But all in all the cruise was—as Barbara Williams, Tom Hayden's wife, put it—one of those "necessary evils." The service was pretty good, too.

THIS JUST IN: "BLACK ROBES WITH HUMANS INSIDE THEM"—*The New York Times*, December 12

EMBARGOED: Hall of Fame wide receiver and class of '94 Representative Steve Largent has long been a proud Republican revolutionary. But this week that description took on a whole new meaning. On December 11, the Oklahoman

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arrived in Havana, unannounced, for a one-day "private fact-finding" tour. The visit was so secretive that even Largent's staff didn't know its purpose or sponsor. "I can't tell you anything, because I don't know anything," admitted one flack. Largent, a hard-line Christian conservative, is an odd emissary for reconciliation with one of the world's last remaining Communist regimes. For years, he toed the GOP line on Cuba and voted to tighten sanctions. Then came Elián González, and Largent, a vocal family-values advocate, broke with his party and said the boy should go home. Nothing wrong with that. But now it seems Largent is having more and more trouble keeping his sympathy for Juan Miguel González from metastasizing into sympathy for Fidel Castro, a man he no longer thinks should be the target of U.S. sanctions. And who knows? Perhaps Castro has changed. After all, official Cuban radio was far more forthcoming than Largent himself about the intent of his visit: "learning about our system and increasing relations between both countries."

GET THIS GUY SOME P.R. TRAINING: "I'm with the Bush-Cheney team, and I'm here to stop the vote."—A Bush lawyer, bursting in on the recount in Miami-Dade County last Saturday, as described in the *St. Petersburg Times*

SPECIAL ED: It's not as if we didn't warn him. In October, we noted that a series of public gaffes by Democratic National Committee Chairman Ed Rendell had left fellow Democrats privately fuming ("Local Hero," by Bryan Curtis, October 23). After Rendell jumped the gun on election night and ripped into Gore's campaign strategy only to discover that the election wasn't actually over, we attempted a second intervention (Notebook, November 20). But all our efforts were for naught. Minutes after the Supreme Court ruling this week, Rendell made for the microphones like an alcoholic for an open bar, becoming the first prominent Democrat to urge Gore to concede. "This is it," he told anyone fortunate enough to be watching MSNBC. "He should act now and concede." Rendell's comments were immediately repudiated by DNC National Chairman Joe Andrew ("inappropriate, if not outrageous"), a committee spokeswoman ("Ed Rendell wasn't speaking for the Democratic National Committee. He was speaking for himself"), and a variety of fellow Democrats. Enjoy life in the private sector, Ed.

TALMUDIC KVETCHERS WATCH: "I've been sitting shivah for ... how many weeks now?"—Neel Lattimore, former press secretary to Hillary Clinton, on the Florida impasse, *The Washington Post*, December 9

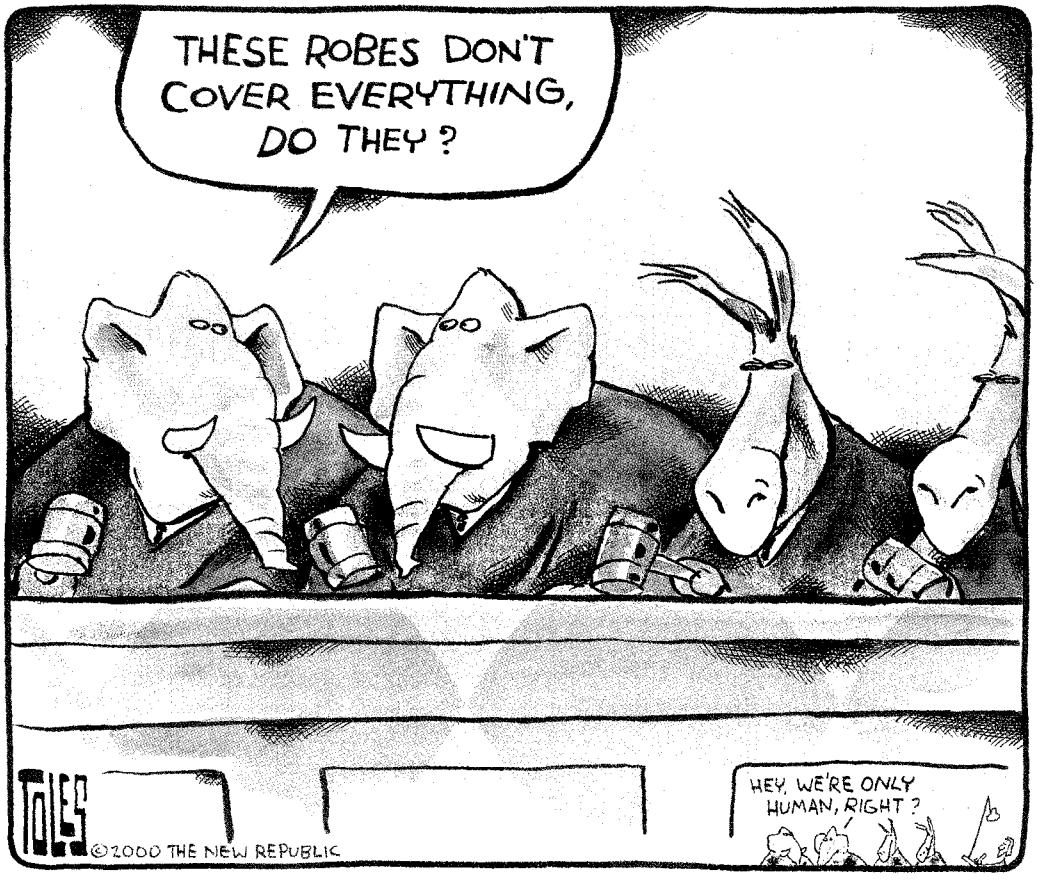
DETAILS, DETAILS: TIM RUSSERT: But, Dick Armey, you have called the Florida Supreme Court a partisan court.

ARMEY: No, [I] have not.

RUSSERT: You have.... On November 22, Dick Armey, press release here. "It's a partisan court making a partisan decision."

ARMEY: Oh, yeah. You're right.

—"Meet the Press," December 10



TOO BAD YOU CAN'T DOWNLOAD FREE THROWS: "It took eight years. It should have taken six or seven ... I thought finishing school would be easy, but it was kind of hard. Thank God for the Internet."—L.A. Laker Shaquille O'Neal, on getting his college diploma this week, *The New York Times*, December 12

THAT'S REASSURING: "There's life after—there's life after defeat."—Michael Dukakis, Northeastern University professor of political science, "CBS News," December 6 ■

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On the Hill

Soft Landing?

By MICHAEL CROWLEY

IT'S ALREADY OBVIOUS that life as president isn't going to be easy for George W. Bush. His tainted Florida victory now assured, Bush immediately begins a precarious balancing act. From political moderates and the media, he'll feel immense pressure to deliver on his talk of a bipartisan Cabinet and a centrist agenda. The Republican right, by contrast, will insist that his administration and his agenda bear its stamp: hard-core conservatives in key positions and an all-out push for Social Security privatization and a big tax cut. Trying to appease both sides may make Bush wish he'd lost the recount after all.

But his predicament may be even worse than that. For, just as Bush starts to walk this political tightrope, an item that's not even on his agenda may detonate beneath him, sending moderates and conservatives alike into a frenzy and threatening to ruin any chance he might have had for a honeymoon.

The issue is campaign finance reform, which, after years gathering momentum in Congress, appears ready to deliver a sonic boom as early as January of next year. Buoyed by his primary crusade, reformer-in-chief John McCain is said to be more energized than ever before. "He is more fired up about this than at any point I've seen him in five years," says one longtime pro-reform lobbyist who recently met with McCain. "He will bring this up at the earliest possible date and won't leave the floor until it's passed. He just doesn't give a shit." Making matters worse for Bush, the anti-reformers also seem more determined than ever—and they're not in the mood to cut the man they put in the White House any slack.

McCain's bill, which he co-sponsors with Democratic Senator Russ Feingold of Wisconsin, would ban all soft money contributions to political parties from unions, corporations, and individuals. A House version has passed twice, but since 1996 Republican filibusters have stymied it in the Senate. Every year, the bill's Senate backers have inched closer to the 60 votes they need to end a filibuster, but the most they've ever gotten is the 53 they mustered in 1999.

Each year, the campaign finance reformers insist they're poised to go over the top. But this year they may actually be right. For starters, McCain's presidential bid dramatically changed old assumptions about campaign finance reform. McCain's stardom showed that reform, once seen as a dull obsession of dreary goo-goos, could be used as a populist tool to whip up voters.

The November election also saw the ouster of several anti-reform Republican senators—including Rod Grams of Minnesota, Spencer Abraham of Michigan, and Slade Gorton of Washington—whose Democratic replacements are expected to support McCain-Feingold. What's more, reformers say, the November results sent a message to sitting Republican senators, 20 of whom are up for reelection in 2002, that blocking reform could cost them their seats. The reformers note that Gorton was one of McCain-Feingold's most prominent opponents, a fact that the woman who defeated him, Maria Cantwell, made one of her signature campaign issues. "I think it's pretty clear," says Feingold, "that the one thing Mitch McConnell"— the Kentucky senator and militant campaign finance reform foe—"said would never happen has happened, which is that people lost seats because of campaign finance reform."

What makes McCain-Feingold even more palatable to some Republicans is the growing realization that it would no longer disproportionately benefit Democrats, who in recent years have erased the GOP's traditional soft money advantage. Republican opposition to reform is "self-defeating," Bill Kristol and Jeffrey Bell, a former Gary Bauer aide, wrote in a September *New York Times* op-ed. "Conservatives ... have no stake in the current system."

All this has created the possibility that several Republican senators who opposed McCain-Feingold in the past might support it this time around. McCain-Feingold boosters point to Gordon Smith of Oregon, Tim Hutchinson of Arkansas, and, somewhat comically, New Hampshire's Bob Smith, an extreme conservative who must also be keenly aware that McCain won his state's presidential primary handily. And Nebraska Senator Chuck Hagel, who promoted a looser version of McCain's bill last year, may at least oppose a filibuster, even if he doesn't vote for the bill itself. All in all, Common Cause now claims to have 59 senators firmly behind a soft money ban. Fifty-seven say they'll back an amendment, sponsored by Olympia Snowe of Maine and James Jeffords of Vermont, that would limit third-party "independent expenditure" ads, which usually attack one candidate in the final days of an election (think of the TV ad by Bush pal Sam Wyly assaulting McCain's environmental record on the eve of the New York primary).

And those numbers don't count wafflers, some of whom are likely to side with McCain once he's on national television railing against the corruption of our democracy. "I think we're in the low sixties when all is said and done," Feingold says. Adds McCain: "I believe we're there. We're going to insist that we bring it up as the first item of business in the Senate."

MCCAIN'S DETERMINATION IS Bush's nightmare. During the campaign, Bush was able to dodge and weave on campaign finance reform. Astute enough to realize after his drubbing in the New Hampshire primary that the issue had legs, Bush publicly posed as a reformer ("with results," no less) to match McCain. But, at the same time, the Texas governor understood that he couldn't alienate the religious right and the National Rifle Association (NRA), both of which vehemently despise McCain's efforts to limit their influence over campaigns. So Bush proposed a "campaign funding reform" that included "paycheck protection" for union workers and didn't ban individual soft money donations. In other words, a reform he knew had no prayer of getting through Congress.

But, now that the election is over, Bush's smoke screens

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won't provide him with much cover. Not only will he face pressure from pundits and from centrist "statesmen" like Senator John Breaux, who'll tout campaign finance reform as a way for Bush to win the bipartisan bona fides he desperately needs after the Florida fiasco; he'll also face even more pressure from the Republican right, which, knowing that its proactive legislative agenda is mostly moot thanks to Bush's contested victory and the 50-50 split in the Senate, will put more energy than ever into holding the line on campaign finance reform.

Although some moderate Republicans have recently softened their opposition to reform, there's no indication the far right is going along with them. Pat Robertson still insists that McCain's bill would "severely cripple" the GOP, and groups like the Christian Coalition and the NRA see new limitations on "issue ads" as tantamount to their destruction. Darla St. Martin, associate executive director of the National Right to Life Committee, calls such measures "repressive and outrageous." Last year a Common Cause official captured the intensity of conservative opposition when he told *The Washington Post* that "sometimes it seems like [pro-lifers] care more about campaign reform than they care about abortion."

And those conservatives will be watching Bush carefully in the coming weeks for any hint of betrayal. "He is a man of his word, and I would look specifically at the plan he proposed," says St. Martin. "That's what he said he was for, and I would assume that's true." For Bush's sake it better be, because, as we all know, there's nothing conservatives despise more than a liar. ■

Tel Aviv Dispatch

Waiting Outside

By Yossi Klein Halevi

Outside the Cinerama, where Lou Reed played not long ago, Likudniks in neckties and peddlers' caps and leather jackets wait impatiently in a cold rain to enter the party's central committee meeting. The gathering has been hastily convened to plan for next February's national elections. Plastic banners on the metal wall of an adjacent construction site proclaim Likud's stark new slogan: we must save Israel. A grim man holds a torch in one hand and, in the other, a sign calling on all right-wing parties to unite. "Israel is facing war from without and ruin from within," he explains.

Only 19 months ago, a defeated Benjamin Netanyahu left Likud with a staggering debt and its lowest-ever parliamentary representation. By accepting, however reluctantly, the Oslo accords, he'd undermined the party's ideological foundation. And, ironically, by fulfilling his campaign promise to drastically reduce terrorism, he allowed Israelis to feel safe enough to bring back the left.

But, thanks to Ehud Barak, the party of national emergency has regained its confidence. Palestinian violence and Barak's restraint have restored the combative spirit to what was known in Menachem Begin's time as "the fighting family." In the Cinerama, a teenage boy in a gorilla suit has a sign reading fight the election like gorillas! pasted on his back. In 1999, the left ran a campaign energized by apocalyptic fear of Netanyahu. But now it's Likud that is desperate to save the country from Barak—and save itself from a political exile unbearable for a party that was long treated as untouchable by Israel's socialist founders.

Shimshon Deri, a big man with gelled hair who has brought a megaphone to the meeting, heads the Likud branch in Pardes Katz, a tough neighborhood near Tel Aviv. "When the left was in power, you couldn't get on a bus without worrying it would blow up," he says. "Then we came to power, and the terrorism stopped." (Or, rather, substantially dropped: Terrorism continued under Netanyahu, too.)

Deri isn't sure whether to be more outraged by Barak's cowardly security policy or by his cowardly political maneuver in resigning from the Knesset and trying to deny Netanyahu, now the country's most popular politician, the right to run against him on a technicality. "The left talks about democracy," Deri says with contempt. "What democracy? The Labor Party nominated Barak in six minutes and no one could run against him. Here Bibi will run against Arik [Sharon] and anyone else who wants to participate. And we'll have open primaries. Where else do you see democracy like that in Israel?"

Indeed, Likud, which under Begin first brought Sephardim into the political mainstream, still prides itself on being the party of the people. The 2,500 central committee members include many working-class Sephardim, Russian immigrants, and Orthodox Jews. Labor, once mostly Ashkenazi, now boasts greater diversity, too, thanks to recruitment

ROB BABBONI

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efforts Shimon Peres began and Barak intensified. Still, Labor hasn't managed to fully shake its image as the party of the Ashkenazi elite.

INSIDE THE HANGARLIKE hall, the combination of national crisis and imminent electoral victory creates an atmosphere at once pensive and elated. Hundreds pace the narrow aisles. A loud sound system plays the jarringly upbeat Likud jingle—"The Likud, it's my home, it's my security"—uniting the party's two essential appeals.

Everyone is waiting for Netanyahu. This is his night, his first appearance before the central committee since his defeat. Some wave banners printed with Netanyahu's face and the words THE PEOPLE ARE THIRSTY FOR YOUR LEADERSHIP. All his failures, apparently, are forgiven—the hatred he encouraged between left and right, the arrogance that drove away the party's best young leaders, the attorney general's reprimands for his moral misjudgment.

Sharon, who built the party on Netanyahu's ruins and now must preside over his return, sits on the long dais flanked by Likud's 18 other parliament members and avoids eye contact with the pro-Netanyahu crowd. Netanyahu enters the hall, and the crowd cheers for several minutes. "Bibi, king of Israel," they sing. Not since Begin has the party had a king.

Deri chants through his megaphone, "Bibi! Bibi!" and leads a group of followers toward the dais, which is guarded by a row of formidable, mostly Russian security men. Deri just wants to get close to Netanyahu, but the scene uncomfortably evokes the old, anarchic Likud—"the infighting family" famous for one central committee meeting where chairs flew. "Shimshon Deri," pleads the emcee, "the media is here. Don't embarrass us before the whole nation." Even at its most triumphant, the party of former outcasts remains insecure.

Sharon approaches the microphone and the Likudniks cheer. They love Arik, the old war hero, but they know he can never be prime minister: However hard-line they may be, the new Likud rank and file want their leader to be a statesman, not an international pariah. Sharon asks for the party's nomination in next week's primaries but promises to back Netanyahu if he loses. The crowd sings the old Zionist song "How Pleasant It Is for Brothers to Sit Together."

Then Netanyahu takes the podium. The Likud jingle plays and the crowd rhythmically claps. "Our savior!" someone calls out. While the old Bibi was widely perceived as untrustworthy and divisive, the new Bibi plays the conciliator. He quiets the catcalls about Barak and is gracious toward Sharon, whom he will almost certainly trounce in the primaries. Like Sharon, he affirms that, no matter who wins, the party will face Barak united. Nevertheless, Netanyahu takes Likud's endorsement for granted and speaks as though he were already its candidate. Calm but forceful, he indicts Barak for appeasement of terrorism and promises to restore Israel's battered deterrence.

The mournful national anthem plays and the delegates stand at attention, arms at their sides or behind their backs, military style. Israelis may have become sloppy toward their national symbols, but Likud is the party of respect. As the crowds disperse, Tzion Cohen, a caterer from a town near Tel Aviv who's been a Likudnik "for as long as I can remember," says to me, "Look at this beautiful party. Black and white and rainbow-colored. In Labor all you'll find are party hacks and opportunists. But Likud attracts those who love this country. We are the people of Israel." ■

What the Supremes don't know about Florida.

Not Equal

By JONATHAN CHAIT

YOU GENERALLY ASSUME that people who have spent decades specializing in a topic know far more about it than you do. On questions of medicine you grant a doctor the benefit of the doubt, and on questions of law you grant a lawyer the same benefit. This is especially true when the lawyers wear robes, work in a large marble building, and write in detail about constitutional statutes of which you were not previously aware.

What can you think, though, when the U.S. Supreme Court hands down a ruling so transparently incoherent that one does not even need any special understanding of law to grasp its vacuity? The central rationale underlying the Court's decision to forbid Florida from counting ballots by hand is "equal protection." Counting different ballots according to different standards, the majority argues, unfairly dilutes the power of some citizens. Forget the legality of this finding—which every lawyer not affiliated with either George W. Bush's legal team or the Supreme Court seems to consider absurd. As a purely analytical matter, the Court's logic holds together only if you know virtually nothing about how the Florida vote was conducted.

If your chronological understanding of the Florida election begins the day the hand count commenced, then the Court's equal protection argument makes sense. Why should some counties have lots of ballots counted and others fewer? But the hand count didn't introduce a new, unequal distortion into a pristine system; the Florida vote up to that point was a teeming mass of inequality. The initial machine recount, for instance, was supposed to be conducted uniformly. But while most counties ran their ballots through the tabulating machines a second time, as they were supposed to do, others merely rechecked their arithmetic. Standards for accepting absentee ballots varied wildly from county to county—some accepting ballots lacking signatures, others accepting ballots without postmarks, one county even allowing a pair of ballots that had been faxed in. The Florida election, in other words, violated the Court's equal protection standard before hand recounts ever began.

The starkest violation, of course, lay in the different kinds of voting equipment used across the state. As anybody who

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has read the newspaper accounts now knows, voters in counties that used optical-scan ballots were far less likely to have their votes go unrecorded than voters who reside in counties using punch cards. In Florida, three out of every 1,000 optically scanned ballots recorded no presidential vote (that is, they were "undervoted"), compared to 15 of every 1,000 punch-card ballots. A small portion of this differential could be explained by demographics—voters in punch-card counties may be less experienced, or have less physical strength, or face more chaotic voting stations—but statistical analysis shows that it's overwhelmingly the fault of the machines.

This discrepancy more than accounted for Bush's margin of victory. If you imagine that the punch-card counties had the same rate of undervoting as the optical-scan counties and that the extra punch-card votes broke down along the lines of each county as a whole, then Gore would win Florida by some 1,500 votes. (This, incidentally, belies the cliché that "we'll never know who won" since the vote differential "fell within the margin of error." It's not true, because the margin of error—namely, bad machines—disproportionately disadvantaged one candidate.)

HERE'S WHERE THE hand count came in. By taking ballots that the machines did not read and turning them into actual votes, it cut down the disparity between punch-card and optical-scan counties. In a statewide hand count, all counties would gain votes, but the counties with the most undervotes would, rightly, gain the most. The leveling effect was slight. Palm Beach had more than 10,000 undervotes—2.2 percent of its total. The manual recount turned only about 800 of them into votes, reducing the county's undervote rate to just under 2.1 percent. Even Broward County, which used the loosest standard for reading ballots, identified only one-quarter of its undervotes. After its permissive manual recount, then, Broward still had almost three times as many undervotes as a typical optical-scan county. Broward voters might have ended up with more voting power than Palm Beach voters, but they still had far less than, say, Seminole County voters.

Was it fair that some counties gained more than others? Of course not. The question is what to do about it. If you were to apply the equal protection standard, you would probably want to make every county use the permissive Broward County standard—which would best alleviate the discrepancy in voting power between voters of different counties. Or maybe, reaching a bit, you would decide that dimpled chads don't have a sufficiently clear precedent in Florida law—or don't indicate a sufficiently clear preference—so you would instead impose the strict Palm Beach standard statewide.

But the Court did neither. Instead, it intervened with the least equitable solution possible. The majority—with unfathomable moral obtuseness—applied the equal protection standard not to the underlying inequality but to the remedy for the inequality. Some of the orphans are receiving more porridge than others: Let's cut them all off!

Of course, as a matter of constitutional stability, you have to respect the legitimacy of a Supreme Court ruling you disagree with. But you'd like to think that when the justices rule, even tendentiously and wrongly, they have based their decision on a coherent theory. That didn't happen this time. Maybe the justices in the conservative majority simply groped about for any plausible rationale for handing the election to their preferred candidate. Or maybe they didn't closely follow the media reports of the Florida recount and the abbreviated testimony never imparted to them a decent understanding of the facts of the case. The first possibility is frightening; the second, merely depressing. I'll try to believe number two. ■

How Team Gore gave up.

Brief Hope

By RYAN LIZZA

TALLAHASSEE, FLORIDA

AT AROUND ELEVEN O'CLOCK Tuesday night, half an hour after the U.S. Supreme Court's decision in *Bush* v. *Gore*, the leaders of George W. Bush's campaign in Florida—including campaign manager Don Evans and lead recount attorney Ben Ginsberg—had just finished a $600 meal in a private room at the Silver Slipper (which describes itself as "a place for Florida's movers and shakers"). Al Gore's recount lawyers, by contrast, were at their offices at 211 Call Street—brewing coffee, huddling around their computers, and girding for battle. As late as 2 a.m., they still didn't think the presidential election was over. "We've got 25 people here ready to write a brief and pull another all-nighter," said one Gore lawyer. "Everyone here is ready to fight."

The evening had started with confusion, which gave way to defiance and then, slowly, to despair. The minute the decision was released, the phones of Gore recount spokesman Doug Hattaway and attorney Jeremy Bash lit up. The networks were saying Gore was done, but Hattaway and Bash gave everyone the same response: It was a complicated opinion, and there wouldn't be an official response from the Gore camp until the following day. "There was a lot of hunger for instant analysis," says Bash. "But we all needed to go through it—and we all needed to get to work." Democrats who strayed from the wait-and-see line had their knuckles rapped. Democratic National Committee Chairman Ed Rendell's own spokesperson called the networks to explain that Rendell was speaking for himself when he called for Gore to concede. "Whenever he comes on, we're all like, 'Oh, great, another Republican,'" griped one of Gore's lawyers shortly after Rendell strayed off-message. When top Gore lawyer Lawrence Tribe suggested it was all over, campaign operatives slapped him down hard. "We called [Tribe], and he went back on air and clarified," says another Gore attorney. "We immediately straightened him out."

As the press team stalled, Gore's lawyers strained to decipher the Court's decision. At 9:30 p.m., a Washington-based Democrat had called Tallahassee to report that the opinion

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would be out at ten o'clock. "We all got ready," says one Gore lawyer, "and, maybe just a split second before the networks started reading snippets, somebody yelled out, 'Reversed!' and then someone yelled out again, 'Remanded!' But nobody really knew what it meant." Without a copy of the decision himself, Ron Klain, Gore's top Tallahassee lawyer and strategist, sat at his desk watching the networks stumble through the opinion while he spoke with Gore over the telephone—"briefing the vice president in real time," as one of Klain's aides describes it. Finally, a Gore lawyer in Washington started faxing the opinion to Tallahassee. Page by page, Bash ran from the fax machine to Klain's desk, where Klain read the opinion to Gore while a dozen other people strained to read it over Klain's shoulder. But when Klain read the critical language on page twelve stating that "any recount seeking to meet the December 12 date will be unconstitutional," he looked up and said, "Yeah, it looks like we're hosed."

HOSED OR NOT, Klain put together a team of lawyers to write one final brief to be filed with the Florida Supreme Court the following morning, if Gore approved. Gore lawyers now call it the "secret brief." It concentrated on two issues: the U.S. Supreme Court's equal protection concerns and its contention that December 12 constituted the final deadline for appointing Florida's electors. The brief asked the Florida Supreme Court to set an extremely liberal statewide standard for a manual recount, a standard based on the 1996 *Delahunt* case, in which the Massachusetts Supreme Court counted dimpled chads as votes. The second major part of the brief asked the Florida court to tell the U.S. Supreme Court that it did not consider December 12 an absolute deadline, only the date by which the Florida court *aspired* to have electors finalized. Gore's lawyers note that even the website of the National Archives says this year's final due date is December 18.

They worked through the night. And, at 9:30 the next morning, a lawyer was putting the finishing touches on the brief's table of contents when the Tallahassee team learned that Gore was packing it in. The secret brief would remain secret. "When the identity of Deep Throat is revealed—that's when we'll release the secret brief," jokes one attorney.

At about noon, Gore called the Tallahassee lawyers himself and thanked them for their work. He even invited them over to his house. Offering directions, the vice president joked, "If you go up Massachusetts Avenue, it's the one where there's a bunch of people standing outside chanting, 'Get out of Cheney's house.'"

Gore told the lawyers not to bash the Supreme Court. But, in private, they did so anyway. "It was such a piss-poor decision," says one. "It was so cowardly. It was factually wrong. I think it was legally wrong. I think they did whatever they could to be politically expedient ... I thought the Supreme Court had to find some compromise to count the votes. To foreclose that opportunity through their own actions I find frightening for democracy."

But, even in times of political and constitutional tragedy, lawyers do not stop being lawyers. And so it was that Chris Sautter, one of the Gore team's top recount specialists, began talking with another lawyer about the Pandora's box of election-law issues that the Supreme Court's "equal protection" opinion has now opened. "He quickly got over the fact that Gore lost," says Sautter. "He said, 'At least the Supreme Court will be generating a lot more business for elections.' So that's the consolation prize." ■

Bush rides the tiger.

Quiet Riot

By DAVID GRANN

TALLAHASSEE, FLORIDA

"I'LL SHOW YOU what I've got in the trunk," says Kevin Guimaraes, a pro-Bush protester, leaning over the back of his rusted Grand Marquis not far from the Florida Supreme Court. He turns the key and the trunk pops open. "See that?" I lower my head and stare inside at the scattered papers and empty cans until I notice, sitting in the back, a large black case containing a semiautomatic rifle. "You never know, if things hit the fan," Guimaraes says. He pulls it out and unlocks the chamber, so that it makes a loud pop. "The minutemen had their muskets, and I have my FN [assault rifle]," he says.

Guimaraes hands me the rifle, and for a moment I point it at the open sky. "I also have this, just in case," he says. He pulls out another gun, this one a pistol. "This is a Browning Hi-Power semiautomatic," he says, removing the empty clip. "It comes with a thirteen-round magazine, but I've got a couple of thirty rounds, too."

A former cop with gold-rimmed glasses and a broad, kind face, Guimaraes is an unlikely radical. Despite his rhetoric and barrel chest, he projects a gentle image; he gave up police work in part, he says, because he didn't like the violence ("I'd get my glasses knocked off me"), and he now spends his days at home caring for his two young daughters while his wife works as a certified public accountant. "I'm not some kind of skinhead," he tells me. "I'm the antithesis of that."

Indeed, Guimaraes is typical of the protesters here—not because he is armed but because he is an ideological revolutionary, someone who sees in the latest crisis a struggle not just for the presidency but for the very soul of the country. "I'm out here," he says, "because if Gore is allowed to prevail, we will no longer live in a country with the rule of law." Because Guimaraes and his fellow protesters look so normal, the media often overlooks their radicalism. But that radicalism has been perhaps the defining characteristic of the Republican Party's most activist core over the past seven years. Time and again during the Clinton era—the Contract with America, impeachment, Elián—disaffected conservatives and libertarians like Guimaraes have burst into the public consciousness, fueled by round-the-clock cable news shows. But, as each episode has receded, the press has reassured America that today's conservatives are like yesterday's:

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moderate and temperate, generally satisfied with the world. Yet that's not really true. People like Kevin Guimaraes feel a deep alienation from America's elite institutions—the media, the courts, and much of popular culture—and this alienation seems likely to outlast the struggle for Florida.

ON SATURDAY MORNING, the day after the Florida Supreme Court's decision mandating a statewide recount, Guimaraes and dozens of other GOP activists show up outside the Leon County public library, where ballots shipped from Miami-Dade County are being stored. They set up on a small hill cordoned off by a strip of yellow crime tape. "Why is there crime tape?" they yell as they prop up their signs under an overcast sky. "Because Democrats are stealing the election!" Most of the demonstrators, like Guimaraes, are middle-aged, educated parents. "This is a middle-class revolt," says Ralf Michels, a bespectacled protester who at one point has to leave to pick up his children at the zoo.

During the brief period during which the recount gets under way, Guimaraes and his colleagues become increasingly convinced that Gore and his allies are carrying out some sort of coup d'état. "Today," says Robert Owen, a retired naval aviator, "the Democratic Party is an un-American party with an alien agenda. Otherwise, it wouldn't be doing what it's doing." Pausing to fix the brim of his pilot's cap, he stares at a handful of nearby Democrats with signs that say COUNT THE VOTES and GORE-LIEBERMAN. "What the Democrats and the [Florida] Supreme Court are doing," he adds, "should frighten the hell out of you."

In contrast, the Gore protesters a few feet away seem passive; several of them have been flown in by the unions to gin up enthusiasm for the recount, but their demonstration seems, much like the Gore campaign itself, inauthentic—an exercise in professionalism. The coming days may see increasingly radical Democratic protests, perhaps trying, under the direction of Jesse Jackson, to racialize the election result. But most of the Democrats I meet in Tallahassee say they can live with a Bush presidency. "All we want to do is count the votes," they say. Or: "Let the system run its course." Or even: "I'm tired of this."

It's as if, somewhere along the way, conservatives switched places with the New Left. Whereas Democrats seem to trust the establishment—the courts, the media, the canvassing boards—the Republican dissidents speak of rising up against a corrupt system. On occasion they even appropriate old leftist sayings like "Justice delayed is justice denied." Their besieged worldview is reinforced by leaders like Tom DeLay—who a day earlier vowed that the Florida Supreme Court's "judicial aggression must not stand." As reporters circulate among the protesters, they are viewed warily—not as independent chroniclers of government but as its co-conspirators. "The media is biased," says Owen, who says he gets most of his news from C-SPAN and the Free Republic website, which, in its latest posts, warns against "judicial tyranny."

"No kidding the media is biased," one woman at the protest declaims to no one in particular. "I've gotten to the point where I can only watch television five minutes a day to see what the latest ridiculous report is. And the number of media that stand up there with a big smile on their face while ... [Gore's] cronies try to take this election away from Mr. Bush...." Her voice trails off as two women filming a documentary with the actor Philip Seymour Hoffman direct their camera toward her. She stares at the lens suspiciously and then says, "Both of my parents—who were strong George senior supporters—thank God they died last year because I think, if they were here today, I think this election ... would've killed them."

NOR IS IT just the elites whom the right-wing protesters view with suspicion. As in the impeachment drama, they are increasingly disgusted with Americans as a whole, with the vast public that seems content and apathetic and doesn't realize the country is in the grips of a crisis. When a nearby arts-and-crafts fair begins to attract more locals than the protest, Owen and Guimaraes grow dispirited. "There should be thousands of people out here," frets Guimaraes. "But most people are passive."

"Maybe our country is gone," replies Owen. "Maybe there is no saving our country ever again."

Over the course of the afternoon, the Bush protesters' frustration only grows—word has leaked out that Gore is picking up votes from the new count. When Democratic Senator Barbara Boxer walks to the front steps of the library to address the cameras, the crowd pushes forward, shouting "Traitor!" and blowing bullhorns so she cannot be heard. "Can't you just let her say her piece?" one of her handlers asks the crowd.

"Why? Why? Why?" one of the protesters shouts back. "You all have ... taken over the Constitution."

A union worker trying to organize the smaller, much-less-energized Democratic protest wanders into the crowd and is shouted down; someone blows a bullhorn in his ear. As he retreats to the other side, he says, "I've never seen so much anger."

And then, just like that, the U.S. Supreme Court stays the recount, and the crowd erupts, shouting and banging on drums. The Democrats, in turn, seem oddly resigned. "I'll respect whatever the Supreme Court does, even if I don't like it," says a black college student holding a GORE-LIEBERMAN sign. Meanwhile, Guimaraes and Owen and the other Bush protesters head to a makeshift Republican headquarters set up for the volunteers, where they eat doughnuts and drink coffee in exhausted celebration.

But even now, talking quietly among themselves, these moms and dads and bankers and accountants and pastors vow that they are ready to return to fight the establishment again—even, it seems, an establishment headed by George W. Bush. "I am not here because of Bush, but because of my principles," says Guimaraes. Later, he adds, "I fear that once he gets into office he may betray his principles. The party is already in danger of out-Democrating the Democrats. And that's the scary part." As Guimaraes and the others begin breaking up to go home, one of the protest organizers calls out to the crowd, "Stay by your phones. We may need you again. Soon." ■

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The Supreme Court commits suicide.

Disgrace

By JEFFREY ROSEN

ON MONDAY, WHEN the Supreme Court heard arguments in *Bush* v. *Gore*, there was a sense in the courtroom that far more than the election was at stake. I ran into two of the most astute and fair-minded writers about the Court, who have spent years defending the institution against cynics who insist the justices are motivated by partisanship rather than reason. Both were visibly shaken by the Court's emergency stay of the manual recount in Florida; they felt naïve and betrayed by what appeared to be a naked act of political will. Surely, we agreed, the five conservatives would step back from the abyss.

They didn't. Instead, they played us all for dupes once more. And, by not even bothering to cloak their willfulness in legal arguments intelligible to people of good faith who do not share their views, these four vain men and one vain woman have not only cast a cloud over the presidency of George W. Bush. They have, far more importantly, made it impossible for citizens of the United States to sustain any kind of faith in the rule of law as something larger than the self-interested political preferences of William Rehnquist, Antonin Scalia, Clarence Thomas, Anthony Kennedy, and Sandra Day O'Connor.

This faith in law as something more than politics has had powerful opponents throughout the twentieth century. For everyone from legal realists and critical race theorists to contemporary pragmatists, it has long been fashionable to insist that the reasons judges give are mere fig leaves for their ideological commitments. Nevertheless, since its founding, THE NEW REPUBLIC has resisted this cynical claim. From Learned Hand and Felix Frankfurter to Alexander Bickel, the editors of this magazine have insisted that, precisely because legal arguments are so malleable, judges must exercise radical self-restraint. They should refuse to second-guess the decisions of political actors, except in cases where constitutional arguments for judicial intervention are so powerful that people of different political persuasions can readily accept them. This magazine has long argued that the legitimacy of the judiciary is imperiled whenever judges plunge recklessly into the political thicket. And this has led editors of different political persuasions to oppose the judicial invalidation of laws we disagreed with as well as those we supported—from Progressive-era labor laws to the New Deal administrative state to laws restricting abortion and permitting affirmative action. In all these cases, we argued that judges should stay their hand. Our views about judicial abstinence have been those of Oliver Wendell Holmes: "If my fellow citizens want to go to hell, I will help them," he said. "It's my job." But in *Bush* v. *Gore*, as in *Dred Scott* and *Roe* v. *Wade*, the justices perceived their job differently. They foolishly tried to save the country from what they perceived to be a crisis of legitimacy. And they sent themselves to hell in the process.

The unsigned per curiam opinion in *Bush* v. *Gore* is a shabby piece of work. Although the justices who handed the election to Bush—O'Connor and Kennedy—were afraid to sign their names, the opinion unmasks them more nakedly than any TV camera ever could. To understand the weakness of the conservatives' constitutional argument, you need only restate it: Its various strands collapse on themselves. And, because their argument is tailor-made for this occasion, the conservatives can point to no cases that directly support it. As Justices John Paul Stevens, Ruth Bader Ginsburg, and Stephen Breyer wrote in their joint dissent, this "can only lend credence to the most cynical appraisal of the work of judges throughout the land."

What, precisely, is the conservatives' theory? "Having once granted the right to vote on equal terms, the State may not, by later arbitrary and disparate treatment, value one person's vote over that of another," they declare. The citation is *Harper* v. *Virginia Board of Elections*, the case that invalidated the poll tax in 1966 on the grounds that it invidiously discriminated against the poor. But there is no claim here that Florida's recount law, shared by 32 other states, discriminates against the poor. Indeed, Florida argued that its scheme is necessary to *avoid* discrimination against the poor, because a uniform system of recounting that treated the punch-card ballots used in poor neighborhoods the same as the optically scanned ballots used in rich ones would systematically undercount the votes of poorer voters. By preventing states from correcting the counting errors that result from different voting technologies, the conservatives have precipitated a violation of equal treatment far larger than the one they claim to avoid.

"The fact finder confronts a thing, not a person," write the conservatives in a clumsy and perverse inversion of the famous line from *Reynolds* v. *Sims*, the great malapportionment case, which noted that "legislators represent people, not trees." But things do not have constitutional rights; people have constitutional rights. It is absurd to claim that the "right" of each ballot to be examined in precisely the same manner as every other ballot defeats the right of each individual to have his or her vote counted as accurately as possible. Were this theory taken seriously, many elections over the past 200 years would have violated the equal protection clause, because they were conducted using hand counts with different standards. The effect of the majority's whimsi-

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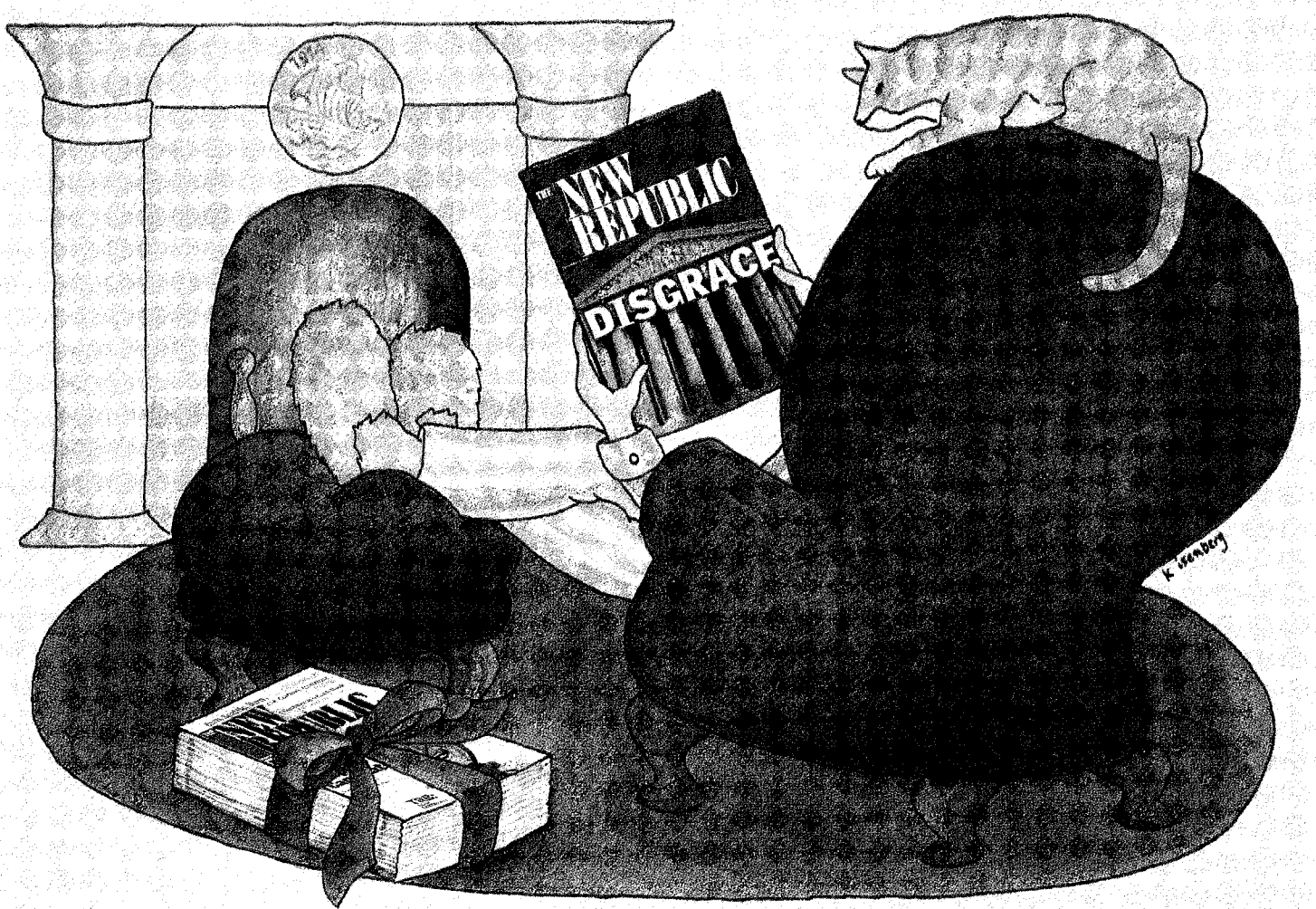

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cal theory is to fan the suspicion, which now looks like a probability, that the loser of both the popular vote and the electoral vote has just become president of the United States. At least the ballots can sleep peacefully.

The conservatives can rustle up only two cases that purportedly support their theory that Florida's recount scheme gave "arbitrary and disparate treatment to voters in its different counties." (Both were written in the 1960s by liberal activist Justice William Douglas, which must have given the conservatives a private chuckle.) The first case, *Gray* v. *Sanders*, held that Georgia's county-based scheme of assigning votes in the Democratic U.S. senatorial primary discriminated against voters in urban counties, whose votes were worth less than those in rural counties. The same logic, applied to this case, would hold that the Florida legislature could not adopt a county-based scheme for assigning votes in presidential elections. But this conclusion is completely inconsistent with the conservatives' earlier argument, the one that emboldened them to stop the manual recount in the first place: that Article 2 of the Constitution allows the Florida legislature to structure its presidential electing system however it chooses. The second case, *Moore* v. *Ogilvie*, held that applying "a rigid, arbitrary formula to sparsely settled counties and populous counties alike ... discriminate[d] against the residents of the populous counties of the State in favor of rural sections." That case, in other words, does not support the conservatives' claim that ballots in rural and urban counties must be counted and recounted in precisely the same manner. It suggests the opposite.

THE REASON THE conservatives can find not a single precedent to support their equal protection theory is because the theory is made up for this case only. But the damage is not so easily limited. The Supreme Court has called into question not only the manual-recount procedure adopted by the legislature of Florida but our entire decentralized system of voting—in which different counties use different technologies to count different ballots designed differently and cast at different hours of the day. In addition to throwing the presidential election and destroying the legitimacy of the Supreme Court, *Bush* v. *Gore* will spawn an explosion of federal lawsuits after every close election, lawsuits arguing that different counties used different ballot designs and voting systems and counted the ballots in different ways.

In this way, *Bush* v. *Gore* is a ludicrous expansion of cases like *Shaw* v. *Reno*, in which the same five-member conservative majority, led by the addled and uncertain Sandra Day O'Connor, held that federal courts must second-guess each legislative exercise in state and federal redistricting to decide whether or not race was the "predominant purpose" in drawing district lines. The idea that this usurpation of our democratic electoral system by the federal judiciary has been precipitated by a group of conservatives who once posed as advocates of judicial restraint and champions of state legislatures can only be met with what the legal scholar Charles Black called the sovereign prerogative of philosophers: laughter.

But the majority asks us not to worry about the implications of its new constitutional violation. "Our consideration is limited to the present circumstances, for the problem of equal protection in election processes generally presents *many complexities*," the justices write. It certainly does. But a mobilized nation is now far less likely to tug its collective forelock and wait for the preening O'Connor and Kennedy to sort out the confusion on our behalf. We've had quite enough of judicial saviors.

IN A POIGNANT attempt to split the difference between the two camps, Justices Breyer and David Souter tried to prevent the Court from destroying itself. They agreed that applying different counting standards to identical ballots in the same county might violate the equal protection clause, and they proposed sending the ballots back to Florida and letting its courts apply a uniform counting standard. But their attempt at statesmanship was crudely rejected by O'Connor and Kennedy, which left Breyer and Souter with their hands extended, played for dupes like everyone else who naïvely believed the conservatives were operating in good faith. "Because the Florida Supreme Court has said that the Florida Legislature intended to obtain the safe-harbor benefits of 3 U.S.C. Sec. 5," O'Connor and Kennedy wrote in the tortuous punch line of their opinion, "Justice Breyer's proposed remedy—remanding to the Florida Supreme Court for its ordering of a constitutionally proper contest until December 18—contemplates action in violation of the Florida election code." With this feint at deference to the state court at precisely the moment there was nothing left to defer to, the jig was up. O'Connor and Kennedy had converted the Florida court's passing reference to the federal law telling Congress which electoral slate to count in the event that a controversy was resolved before December 12 into a barrier, now mysteriously embedded in state law, that prevented the Florida Supreme Court from completing manual recounts after December 12. And for the Court to announce this rule at ten o'clock at night on December 12, after having stopped the count two precious days earlier, only added to the gallows humor.

It will be impossible to look at O'Connor, Kennedy, Scalia, Rehnquist, and Thomas in the same light again, much as it was impossible to look at President Clinton in the same light after seeing him exposed in the Starr Report. But this time the self-exposure is also a little bracing. Conservatives have lectured us for more than 30 years about the activism of the Warren and Burger Courts. Those tinny and hypocritical lectures are now, thankfully, over. By its action on December 12, the Supreme Court has changed the terms of constitutional discourse for years to come. Just as *Roe* v. *Wade* galvanized conservatives a generation ago to rise up against judicial activism, so *Bush* v. *Gore* will now galvanize liberals and moderates for the next generation. But, unlike the conservative opponents of *Roe*, liberals must not descend to the partisanship of the current justices; they must transcend it. The appropriate response to *Bush* v. *Gore* is not to appoint lawless liberal judges who will use the courts as recklessly as the conservatives did to impose their sectarian preferences on an unwilling nation. The appropriate response, instead, is to appoint genuinely restrained judges, in the model of Gins-

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burg and Breyer, who will use their power cautiously, if at all, and will dismantle the federal judiciary's imperious usurpation of American democracy. Those of us who have consistently, if perhaps naïvely, opposed liberal and conservative judicial activism throughout the years can now point to *Roe* and *Bush* as two sides of the same coin. (How fitting that Bush is now a dubious president *and* a dubious precedent.)

In his dissent in *Casey* v. *Planned Parenthood*, the abortion case that reaffirmed *Roe* in 1992, Scalia recalled the portrait of Chief Justice Taney that hangs in the Harvard Law School library. Taney had led a bitterly divided Supreme Court to strike down the Missouri Compromise; but, instead of saving the nation from its partisan divisions, his reckless intervention precipitated the Civil War:

> There seems to be on his face, and in his deep-set eyes, an expression of profound sadness and disillusionment. Perhaps he always looked that way, even when dwelling upon the happiest of thoughts. But those of us who know how the luster of his great Chief Justiceship came to be eclipsed by *Dred Scott* cannot help believing that he had that case—its already apparent consequences for the Court and its soon-to-be-played-out consequences for the Nation—burning on his mind. I expect that two years earlier he, too, had thought himself "call[ing] the contending sides of national controversy to end their national division by accepting a common mandate rooted in the Constitution." It is no more realistic for us in this litigation, than it was for him in that, to think that an issue of the sort they both involved ... can be "speedily and finally settled" by the Supreme Court.... Quite to the contrary, by foreclosing all democratic outlet for the deep passions this issue arouses, by banishing the issue from the political forum that gives all participants, even the losers, the satisfaction of a fair hearing and an honest fight, by continuing the imposition of a rigid national rule instead of allowing for regional differences, the Court merely prolongs and intensifies the anguish.

Who would have dreamed that in describing Taney's portrait Scalia imagined his own? ■

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Stanley Kauffmann on Films

Flying, East and West

ANG LEE ASTONISHES. The still-early career of this director would be incredible except that the films exist. Born in Taiwan (in 1954) and educated in the United States, he made his first feature, *Pushing Hands* in 1992, the story of a Chinese-American who brings his father to live with him in New York. (I've not seen it.) Then Lee made, in breathtaking succession, *The Wedding Banquet*, about the mock wedding of a gay Chinese-American in New York, and *Eat Drink Man Woman*, about an aging Taipei chef and his banquet masterpiece. It seemed clear that the talented Lee was going to give us a series of probing, humorous, culturally rich pictures about East-and-West today. But then he directed *Sense and Sensibility*, as sterling a screen rendering of a classic English novel as has ever been made, acutely sensitive to period and place. Then came *The Ice Storm*, which, though it had a mild screenplay, was a sharp look at modern American suburban life. Next was *Ride with the Devil*, a Civil War story, done with sweaty-picturesque nineteenth-century American verity And now, just as we are whirling with his grasp of Austen's England and Amtrak's America and Mathew Brady's Civil War, he delights us with a Chinese film steeped in tradition. (And remember, all this has happened since 1992.)

Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon (Sony Pictures Classics) is a cinematic ballad. The era isn't specified: the film is set back there in that time of romantic possibilities when so many of the world's romantic ballads take place. Some of it is set in Beijing and the schools of meditation and martial arts that are mentioned are historical fact; but early on, the film says to us, "Questioners, relax. Don't narrow your eyes, widen them. You are now an adult child. Isn't this sword fight dazzling? This landscape seductive? This lover's abduction of his beloved the sort of dash you never thought you would see after Errol Flynn?" The answer to all these questions is a "yes" for which it is hard to find enough breath.

The screenplay was adapted by Lee and his customary producer, James Schamus, from one part of a five-part novel by Wang Du Lu. The interwoven stories include: a tale of a knight—perhaps the Chinese equivalent of a Japanese samurai—seeking revenge for the murder of his master; plus his long-postponed romance with an equally courageous mature woman; and a tale of a wealthy maiden's loathing of an arranged marriage and her rescue by a derring-do adventurer. The film sweeps all around China from an intricately busy city to soft green illimitable mountains to equally immense parched desert. The physical world melds with the pulsing narratives in a huge graceful ballet.

Most of the principal actors, men and women, engage in bouts of swordplay and other combat that obviously required intense training. (The martial arts master was Yuen Wo-Ping, who, says Lee, is "one of my heroes.") These actors give touching and true performances—Chow Yun Fat as the knight, Michelle Yeoh as his taciturn beloved, Zhang Ziyi as the betrothed girl, Chang Chen as her dashing lover—yet they recurrently leap to another plane, martial pyrotechnics. (The first two actors are famous in Asia as stars of martial arts films.) Imagine, say, Meg Ryan and Tom Hanks interweaving their performances with action so complex and demanding that we wonder how they had time to learn anything about acting.

Obviously camera tricks and invisible wires helped the action. People walk up walls and sail over buildings; the climactic fight takes place in midair over a forest with treetops as trampoline, but much of the martial arts combat is done, really, before us, and in any case the results are so beautiful (inescapable word) that we can only be grateful for whatever was added. A bow to two others very much involved. Peter Pau, the cinematographer, treats landscapes like a Chinese painter and treats interiors with the clerestory lighting of a Western painter. Tim Yip's costume designs range from simplicity that bespeaks character to complexity that implies a whole culture.

It is all a gorgeous banquet, more satisfying than the literal one that Lee cooked up in *Eat Drink Man Woman*. What next in his unpredictable career? What will be the next astonishment?

A friend who is a university teacher says that he recently mentioned the Beatles in a class and the students, in their late teens and early twenties, said, "Who?" Shortness of memory is nowadays a given, but I was puzzled that the mothers of these students had never mentioned the objects of their own adolescent shriekings and swoonings. Anyway, the problem is now wonderfully solved. The Beatles' first feature, **A Hard Day's Night** (Miramax), made in 1964, has just been re-released in a crisp new print with the soundtrack refurbished. What a holiday gift—a film in which life itself is a holiday.

How many films are there that exist through and in high spirits? A few by the now-forgotten Philippe de Broca, *The Joker*, *Five Day Lover*, *That Man from Rio*. A few by the director of *Hard Day*, Richard Lester, including another Beatles film. Some from the American 1930s. Oh, of course there are more, but sheer zaniness—as distinct from comedy, even from slapstick—is rare. None of this kind that I can remember surpasses *A Hard Day's Night*.

The strangest reaction in seeing the film again was the feeling of youth. I certainly was not young when it came out, but seeing it again made me feel that I was recapturing youth. This revisit was at the Film Forum in New York, and I was at first surprised by the number of white heads in the crowded theater. Later I understood: the Fountain of Youth on celluloid. When the 36-year-old picture finished, the audience applauded. I joined. The picture is a joy. The Beatles were and remain endearingly brash, four Pucks with irresistible songs.

The story—by Alun Owen—is simple, so the film doesn't have to creep into crannies of plot, it can just let the Beatles misbehave and sing. They take a train to London to do a TV show, cavort on the train, in and out of the TV studio, drive practically everyone mad—except girls who are otherwise maddened—do their show, then move airily on. The dialogue is sassy. On the train they tease and irritate a stuffy middle-aged gent who bursts out, "I fought the war for you lot." A Beatle responds: "I bet you're sorry you won."

The four of them seem rarely to walk; they often hardly seem to touch the ground. Lester includes sequences that have nothing to do with anything except a release of their disdain of order—like an overhead shot of their impromptu gamboling in an empty city lot. All through

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the picture they seem to be saying that they have plenty of time left in which to be grown up; meanwhile....

The one sad note is not in the film itself but is connected with it. (I don't mean John Lennon's fate.) What has happened to Richard Lester? His first short, *The Running, Jumping and Standing Still Film* (1960), pirouetted with exactly the intelligent wackiness that made him the ideal Beatles director. After *A Hard Day's Night* came the second Beatles opus, *Help!*, then—un-Beatled—such films as *The Knack, A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum*, and the most bitterly Brechtian comedy I have ever seen on film, *How I Won the War*. After that, the exquisitely made *Petulia*. But then a series of pictures that, for all their good touches, seemed like jobs he was grateful to get. He has done nothing at all, I think, since 1991. Lester could not have stayed Beatles-fresh all his life (they didn't, either), but seeing the gifted *Hard Day* again is a reminder of gifts unfulfilled. ■

The Vital Centrist

By SEAN WILENTZ

A Life in the Twentieth Century: Innocent Beginnings, 1917–1940 by Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr.

(Houghton Mifflin, 384 pp., $27)

I.

THERE IS AN old, by now wearisome argument over whether historians should stand aloof from the political controversies of their own times. According to some fastidious scholars, passions about the present can only poison interpretations of the past. "Usable" history or "relevant" history, this party contends, inevitably invites distortion. While various giants of the profession from around the Western world have assiduously avoided dropping any hint of their opinions about contemporary matters, others have made no secret of their political views, but have bent over backwards to banish those views from their historical writing. The late J. H. Hexter, a leading historian of the Renaissance and the English Revolution, spoke for this latter group, more cantankerously than most. "For a small part of my day," Hexter wrote in 1961,

> I live under the comfortable rule of bland intellectual irresponsibility vis-à-vis the Great Issues of the Contemporary World, a rule that allows me to go off half-cocked with only slight and occasional compunction. But during most of my day—that portion of it that I spend in dealing with the Great and Not-So-Great Issues of the World between 1450 and 1650—I live under an altogether different rule. The commandments of that rule are:
> 1. Do not go off half-cocked.
> 2. Get the story straight.
> 3. Keep prejudices about present-day issues out of this area.

But this cannot be the end of the matter. A strong case can also be made on behalf of many practitioners of what Hexter derided as "present-minded" history, on behalf of scholars who have not abdicated their political commitments when writing history, but who have tamed them with rigorous historical craftsmanship. John Hope Franklin, Gertrude Himmelfarb, Eric Hobsbawm, and Eugene Genovese are among the exemplary historians in this mold. These scholars find in their political beliefs a vital emotional connection to their historical material. That connection does not make their learning and their analysis any less impressive; indeed, it saves their scholarship from the perils of pedantry.

To a certain extent, of course, the defenders of "present-mindedness" are just being realistic when they maintain that every historian reflects to some degree, consciously or not, his or her own historical context. And so one historiographical commonplace chases another. The safest conclusion to draw is that neither "past-minded" historians nor "present-minded" historians have a prior advantage, and that good history—and bad history—can be written in either mode. Still, future historiographers will have to puzzle over why, in the second half of the twentieth century, so many of the most important historians of the United States were distinctly present-minded.

Richard Hofstadter, who did as much as anyone to re-direct the writing of American history away from the old simplifications of the Progressive era, frankly admitted that "to a very large extent" his first major book, *The American Political Tradition and the Men Who Made It*, "was a product of the social criticism of the 1930s, a book in which the American political tradition is being seen from a vantage point well to the left." Although his politics later evolved into a more skeptical liberalism, Hofstadter's subsequent books—*The Age of Reform, Anti-Intellectualism in American Life*, and the others—were always attuned to continuing political arguments and dilemmas. The great Southern historian C. Vann Woodward—more of a Charles A. Beard-style Progressive than Hofstadter, but no simplifier—wrote, among other present-minded historical works, *The Strange Career of Jim Crow*, the book that Martin Luther King, Jr., described as "the Bible of the civil rights movement." When accused of writing "history with a purpose," Woodward liked to plead guilty, with the explanation that it was better than writing history without a purpose.

What made them tick? Hofstadter and Woodward shared with many other committed American scholars of their cohort a certain marginality at the start of their careers. Hofstadter, a half-Jew and a political radical from Buffalo, was so wary of his early prospects that he came perilously close to leaving the academy for journalism. Woodward, from an obscure small town in Arkansas, bounced around for years from New York to North Carolina to Florida, dabbling in leftist causes along the way, until he finally made his professional mark. And so, from their life stories and the life stories of many others, it seems that the achievements of recent "present-minded" American history are really the achievements of gifted outsiders, often with left-wing pasts, who persevered and transformed the guild with their fresh perspectives.

All except for Hofstadter and Woodward's contemporary (and friend) Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr. He may be the most unabashedly present-minded historian of his generation. No major American histo-

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rian of his time—and perhaps of any other time—has been more directly involved in politics, as an actor and an author, than Schlesinger. It has been said, unkindly but not wholly unfairly, that every page of *The Age of Jackson*, his first important work, voted for Franklin Roosevelt. His appointment as special assistant to President Kennedy, and his subsequent writings about John Kennedy and Robert Kennedy have marked him—for better or worse, depending on the critic— as Camelot's court historian. And in this rich first volume of his memoirs, which concludes in 1950, Schlesinger proudly embraces the present-minded historians' motto, attributed to Benedetto Croce, that all history is contemporary history.

YET IF HE is not exactly a Brahmin, neither is Schlesinger an outsider. Born in Columbus, Ohio, in 1917, the son of mixed German and New England stock, he counts among his reputed ancestors, through his mother's family, the great nineteenth-century liberal historian George Bancroft. When he was only seven, his historian father—also named Arthur, and a rising academic star at Ohio State—took up an appointment at Harvard. Thereafter it appears that, vocationally if not intellectually, Professor Schlesinger's boy has never looked back.

In the months after he received his B.A. at Harvard in 1938, Schlesinger turned his senior honors thesis into his first book, a fine biography of Orestes Brownson, the nineteenth-century political writer and radical-turned-reactionary. When the book appeared in April 1939, its precocious author had crossed the ocean to the other Cambridge, to enjoy a fellowship year at Peterhouse, hobnobbing with the cream of the British intelligentsia (including the young Hobsbawm) and soaking up the atmosphere of Europe on the brink of war. After a stint back at Harvard at the Society of Fellows—he never found it necessary to earn a doctorate—Schlesinger divided his time during the war years between private work on his massive study of the Jackson era and public work in Washington for the Office of War Information. (Bad eyesight barred him from the draft.) He wound up as one of the younger men in the legendary intellectual precincts of the Office of Strategic Services, dispatched to London and, after Liberation Day, to Paris.

In 1945, while still abroad in OSS, Schlesinger published *The Age of Jackson*. By the time he returned home in October, the book had received the triumphant reception that earned it twenty-five weeks on the bestseller list and, in 1946, the Pulitzer Prize. Schlesinger was all of 29. Few faculty brats have enjoyed such meteoric success, least of all in academic history, where talent usually takes a bit longer to blossom than in most of the other arts and sciences. Young Schlesinger was unquestionably a prodigy; but he also had, by dint of his parentage and his connections, a leg up on everyone else. If not to the manor born, he was certainly to the academic manner born. From the very start, he was more the university dauphin than the outsider, and he has made the most of it.

And yet his scholarly sympathies, from the Brownson book on, have always been with historical outsiders, the poor and the working classes, and with those American political leaders, from Jackson to Roosevelt to Robert Kennedy, whom he has perceived as the outsiders' champions. Trying to explain this paradox, the historian John Morton Blum once described Schlesinger as a "Tory democrat." It is an apt label, one that captures Schlesinger's admixture of egalitarian empathy and aristocratic style. Yet beneath the paradox, there is a less complicated and stubborn core of conviction to Schlesinger, as both historical writer and public figure. He is, in a word, a liberal—and he has been a liberal more consistently and more wisely and more productively than any other historian now alive. That he is also an ambitious and appetitive man, and no stranger to celebrity and its culture, gives his memoirs a dimension of added glamour and zip; but it is chiefly as intellectual autobiography—the story of the early making of a singularly principled and influential American liberal—that this first volume of remembrances is so instructive and, at times, so moving.

II.

JAMES CHACE RECENTLY hailed *A Life in the Twentieth Century* as a latter-day equivalent of *The Education of Henry Adams*. The comparison is a little ridiculous, and it slights Schlesinger as well as Adams. Schlesinger himself, in the foreword to his book, calls Adams's masterpiece "the greatest of American autobiographies," and there is nothing in Schlesinger's succeeding pages to overturn that judgement. Adams's memoir is a work of high art, the flaring at dusk of a tortured soul, a nineteenth-century man out of his time—brilliant about America, and evasive beyond the point of mendacity about himself. Schlesinger, as ever, writes smoothly and sometimes brilliantly, but his book has little of the grandeur of *The Education of Henry Adams*, even less of its amnesia, and none of its preciosity and its pretense. Schlesinger's book is oddly lacking in literary merit: in many places it reads like an archive, less written than assembled, as if old letters and diary notations and book reviews had been lined up in chronological order and pressed into prose. Yet there are considerable virtues in the strictly literary inferiority to Adams, and the virtues are illuminating.

Despite their superficial similarities—both men were Harvard students and professors, both were historians fascinated with politics and power—Adams and Schlesinger could not be more different. Looking backward at the end of his life, Adams regarded much of American history as a calculated insult to his remarkable family—and to his remarkable self. As a historian, he devoted his labors to retrieving the Federalist honor of the Adamses against the accumulating Jeffersonian myth; and as a disciplined craftsman, he turned his sense of injury into inspired and challenging scholarship. But America, hell-bent on vulgar, liberal progress, could not have cared less; and so the aging patrician transformed his bitterness into his overpowering and uncandid *Education*, a memoir so bizarrely artful that it says nothing at all about his beloved wife, nothing about his marriage to her and nothing about her suicide.

Schlesinger, by contrast, is sunny and forthright. To be sure, he suffered his own personal and historical losses, most publicly with the assassinations of the Kennedy brothers; and he has seen his once-regnant brand of New Deal liberalism come under heavy attack from both the right and the left, relegated by many observers to the historical dustbin. Yet if Schlesinger has his wounds, he is also stoic. He still has good reason to believe that, in the fullness of time, his democratic interpretations (not to say his Democratic interpretations) of American history, so at odds with Henry Adams's interpretations, will stand up well. Schlesinger is a man at home in his time. He carries no grievance against modernity. Although as alert to tragedy, and to irony, as Adams was, Schlesinger finally evinces serenity and not rage. If, as a result, his memoirs are more prosaic, they are also more tough-minded and more humane.

A part of that humanity involves high-level insider gossip, gathered on the run, recorded in letters and occasional diaries, and now descanted by someone who has been everywhere and met everyone. Among the Harvard historians, Perry Miller stands out in Schlesinger's account—not just for his demanding, sinewy scholarship on the Puritans, but also for his macho bluff and bluster, his wartime Irish mistress, and his announced desire to risk his life and kill as many Nazis as he could. Among the Washingtonians, there is the *arriviste*

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Secretary of Defense James V. Forrestall, who eventually took his own life—like Miller, a character of the 1920s, but more Fitzgerald than Hemingway, "a highly wound-up Wall Streeter with clenched jaw and mistrustful eyes," who "[i]n his mad dash upward in life, one felt ... had lost something he desperately wanted to recover." During the war in London, Schlesinger meets Isaiah Berlin over dinner and is immediately smitten by Berlin's "marvelous quality of *intensifying* life so that one perceived more and thought more and understood more." Somewhat less expected is his report, quoted from a private letter, of his first real encounter with a young Massachusetts congressman-elect at Joseph Alsop's salon in Georgetown in 1946: "Kennedy seemed very sincere and not unintelligent, but kind of on the conservative side."

Sometimes Schlesinger's patience for eccentricity and folly wears thin. "His talk about his wife and his mistress reminded one of a high school senior discussing his girls," he writes of Captain Perry Miller, "and his description of his newly acquired 'lust' for using his 'BB gun' (carbine) seemed equally juvenile." Yet the worst of Miller cannot undo his best, in Schlesinger's eyes, which was his historical writing. Throughout his reminiscences, Schlesinger seems remarkably free of the urge to pass judgement and to settle scores, preferring to report on the worlds he saw and the people he met with a kind of bemused fascination at the buzz of existence. "He had an enormous generosity of spirit," Schlesinger writes of Berlin, "an unparalleled sense of fun and an unquenchable pleasure in the vagaries of human existence." His own memoirs reflect the same qualities.

But Schlesinger's humane appreciation of complexity and variety is not simply temperamental, it is also a matter of political conviction and, at bottom, philosophical conviction. As his memoirs make clear, its origins, in Schlesinger's case, are largely Progressive—and largely paternal. In the 1920s and 1930s, Arthur Meier Schlesinger, Sr., was one of the leading young exponents of what his Columbia teacher James Harvey Robinson had called the New History. Brimming with Progressive-era reformist optimism, intent on allying history with the newly emerging social sciences, Robinson and his followers rejected narrowly political conceptions of the past in favor of studying the wide array of social and cultural forces, down to the most mundane aspects of everyday life. Schlesinger, impressed by Robinson's lectures, wrote his doctoral dissertation on colonial American merchants and the making of the Revolution.

Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., by Jack Coughlin for The New Republic

(Hailed by another of his teachers, Charles A. Beard, as "the most significant contribution that has ever been made to the history of the American Revolution," Schlesinger's book, published in 1918, still turns up in scholarly footnotes and bibliographies.) He went on, first at Ohio State and then at Harvard, to write and to teach about a wide variety of social historical themes, efforts capped off by his co-editorship with Dixon Ryan Fox of the landmark multivolume series, *A History of American Life*, including a volume of his own, *The Rise of the City, 1878-1898*, which corrected some of the powerful agrarian biases of the older Progressive historians.

If the senior Schlesinger specialized in social and cultural history, he nonetheless had deep political interests. Raised a Midwestern Democrat, his first great hero was William Jennings Bryan. Thereafter he felt tugged by the Bull-Moose Progressivism of Theodore Roosevelt and the socialism of Eugene V. Debs, but his strong heartland sympathies for the underdog never took him too far out of the American mainstream. In 1918, he did fall in with a group of disaffected liberals and leftists in something called the Committee of Forty-Eight, which proposed a new radical party that would stand between the Democrats and the Socialists, but he dropped out of the group before too long, and he never again strayed too far from his basic Democratic liberalism.

Like father, like son. The younger Schlesinger's memoirs are never gushy or sentimental about the elder Schlesinger, but it is clear that the boy idolized the man. His given name was Arthur Bancroft Schlesinger (Bancroft was his mother's maiden name), but around the time he was fourteen he began calling himself Arthur Meier, Jr. A few years later, as a senior at Exeter, he was one of the old-money prep school's tiny band of Roosevelt supporters, and he wrote a theme paper, very much in line with his father's views, on "Why Hoover Should Not Be Elected." (He got a B+.) If Arthur, Sr., and Arthur, Jr., ever had a serious political disagreement over the next twenty years, these memoirs do not report it.

At Harvard, young Arthur naturally took most of his courses in history, and majored in History and Literature, overseen by Perry Miller and F. O. Matthiessen. Restive after only two years, he was eventually rescued by his senior essay project—a study, at his father's suggestion, of the then-forgotten essayist and editor Orestes Brownson. The choice fit perfectly with the New History impulse, bringing Schlesinger, Jr., in touch with a peripatetic mind that was thoroughly in the thick of politics and social unrest during his long lifetime—a man, Schlesinger now writes, who "took almost every side of every hot

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question and was a sledgehammer controversialist at every step."

Working on Brownson did not merely reinforce his father's shining example. It also enriched Schlesinger's personal intellectual development, in ways that would affect his later political and historical thinking. Starting out as a Calvinist minister, Brownson had turned to Universalism, then Unitarianism, then the early labor movement; he met Emerson and joined the Transcendental Club, then met George Bancroft, Schlesinger's reputed maternal-line forebear, who got him a government job through his connections with the Democratic Party. In 1840, Brownson published his most famous essay, "The Laboring Classes," a full-throated attack on capitalism that, eight years before Marx and Engels's *Communist Manifesto*, predicted an all-out war of the poor against the rich, and called upon his readers "to emancipate the proletariat, as the past had emancipated the slaves."

It was stirring stuff to read in 1937, a reminder that, a full century before the Great Depression, America had known deep antagonisms between capital and labor—and a standing rebuke to Schlesinger's dogmatic radical classmates who had embraced Marx and Engels alone as the founts of all historical and political wisdom. Yet Brownson was a negative object lesson as well. Shortly after he published "The Laboring Classes," the electorate chose not Brownson's radical Democrats but the conservative Whigs to run the country. In despair, Brownson swerved sharply from the far left to the far right, supporting the presidential candidacy of the slaveocrat John C. Calhoun in 1844 and joining the Catholic Church, where he would remain, a prickly presence, for the rest of his life.

Schlesinger, the collegiate New Dealer, could still admire the radical Brownson's maxim, "Let government take care of the weak, the strong can take care of themselves"—but he also had to come to terms with the perils of Brownson's doctrinalism, and the ease with which totalizing politics of the left could turn into totalizing politics of the right. "One also felt the pathos of modernity in this stormy pilgrim," Schlesinger now recalls, "this intellectually displaced person wandering passionately from one system to another until he came to relative rest in the historic certitudes of the Catholic Church." While building on his father's version of the New History, young Schlesinger was also beginning to reinvent his father's Progressive-era politics, advancing gradually toward what he would one day describe as the flexible, pragmatic liberalism of "the vital center."

III.

AFTER SUCCESSFULLY publishing his Brownson book, Schlesinger thought that he would stick with Jackson-era biography and study the life of George Bancroft. To this day, Schlesinger is hazy about where and even if the great Bancroft actually fits into his family tree; the presumed blood relation, Schlesinger writes, is a matter of family tradition. But regardless of the genealogical facts, Schlesinger found in Bancroft another fearless controversialist—and a historical role model to go along with his father. Like Schlesinger, Bancroft had attended Exeter and Harvard. Like Schlesinger, and like Brownson, Bancroft had been deeply struck by what he called the continuing historical "feud between the capitalist and the laborer, the house of Have and the house of Want." But whereas Brownson had gone off the deep end, Bancroft stayed steady—writing, between 1834 and 1866, the first consequential history of the United States in nine volumes, while carving out a public career as a Democratic politician, a presidential speechwriter, a member of President Polk's cabinet, and American ambassador, first to the Court of St. James and then to Prussia. "One of the last of America's universal men," Schlesinger calls him—a fit subject for emulation as well as for research.

The Bancroft project gradually mutated into an even more ambitious study of the entire Jacksonian period. The prevailing academic view, promulgated chiefly by Frederick Jackson Turner but essentially endorsed by the entire Progressive generation, was that Jackson was a frontiersman, whose drive to the White House signified the coming to power of the backwoods, which was the presumed crucible of American democracy. But reading Bancroft's papers on top of Brownson's made Schlesinger skeptical of the conventional wisdom. If Jacksonianism was quintessentially Western, how could one explain why Jackson's chief political antagonist was Henry Clay of Kentucky—a man nicknamed "Harry of the West"? How could Turner's frontier thesis make sense of the torrents of Jacksonian political writings and speeches focused on monopoly, banking, trade unions, and other problems of a developing capitalist society? And if Jacksonianism was an uprising of the rude backwoods, why were so many leading Eastern intellectuals and writers—not just Bancroft, but Hawthorne, Whitman, William Cullen Bryant, and more—drawn to Jackson's cause?

The book that resulted, *The Age of Jackson*, was a masterwork for many reasons. By arguing that the class-riven Eastern cities had as much to do with producing the Jacksonian movement as the comparatively classless Western frontier did, the book followed up Schlesinger, Sr.'s efforts (as Schlesinger, Jr., now observes) to provide "an urban slant on American development." But at another level, the younger Schlesinger transcended his father. By examining the Eastern Jacksonians in all of their variety, Schlesinger became taken up with ideas as few American political historians had yet attempted—composing, in effect, a multifaceted intellectual history of a political movement. Nothing quite like it had ever been written. The book revised the Progressives' interpretations while fulfilling their mission of methodological innovation. "It is a new kind of history," a delighted Arthur, Sr., wrote after reading the typescript, "joining intellectual and political history in what I hope may be permanent wedlock."

THE RAMIFICATIONS OF this "new kind of history" ran well beyond academic debates—one reason (apart from its vivid style) why *The Age of Jackson* acquired such a huge popular readership. By finding modern American ideas and conflicts taking shape in the supposedly distant Jacksonian era, Schlesinger made that era intelligible to a modern American audience. And by placing ideas as well as interests at the heart of Jacksonian politics, Schlesinger ennobled both democracy and its connections to intellectual life. For decades, democracy and intelligence had seemed to be at war with each other. By the 1920s, American democracy had produced Mencken's "booboisie" and worse, with its peculiarly American mixture of Protestant fundamentalism and crass commercialism. In the radical '30s, advanced thinkers held that American democracy was not in itself intellectually or institutionally capable of curing the social antagonisms of capitalism, and that only revolution would do. But Schlesinger, in his scholarship and in his unshakable New Deal faith, found ideas and art and literature all perfectly compatible with democracy—including the grubby partisan democracy of the 1830s and 1840s. The secret hero of *The Age of Jackson* was not Jackson himself, nor (as some claimed) some version of Franklin Roosevelt projected onto the past. It was the man with whom Schlesinger had begun, George Bancroft—the liberal as historian, the historian as Democratic party pol, the intellectual as diplomat and officeholder—whose remark about the house of Have and the house of Want served as the book's epigraph.

Before long, the deeper implications of *The Age of Jackson* helped to foment a ferocious critical backlash. Conservative

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writers, led by the central banker Bray Hammond, ridiculed Schlesinger's admiring assessment of Jackson's momentous war on the Second Bank of the United States, and charged (incorrectly, it has turned out) that Jackson's populistic policies led directly to the disastrous Panic of 1837 and the depression that followed it. An even fiercer counterattack was launched by the so-called "consensus" historians, many of them centered at Columbia, who charged that the book had seriously overstated the degree of conflict in the 1830s and 1840s, had confused the Jacksonians' entrepreneurial liberalism with pro-labor liberalism, and had ignored the basic agreement of Democrats and Whigs over everything from individualism to the sanctity of private property. What Schlesinger had identified as supposedly genuine political ideas about the economy and the government, his critics charged, were little more than propagandistic claptrap. "In the age of Eisenhower," Schlesinger recalls, "the consensus argument was eventually pressed to the point where it almost obliterated any differences between Jacksonians and Whigs and left the savage temper of the age of Jackson a mystery."

Today Schlesinger concedes that *The Age of Jackson* did not do justice to Clay, John Quincy Adams, and the other Whig advocates of the nationalist American System, by portraying them as mere agents of the business classes. So, too, he confesses that, in the mid-1940s, "the predicament of women, of blacks, of Indians, given new salience by the felt pressures of later times, was shamelessly out of mind." Yet he can also point to a generation's worth of scholarship since the 1960s that has upset the consensus interpretation, and vindicated the Jacksonians' and the Whigs' own view of themselves and each other, as explained in *The Age of Jackson*, that "the two parties represented very different attitudes toward business rule and represented, to a degree, different classes." Despite its numerous deficiencies, no major work of American history of its vintage, apart from C. Vann Woodward's *Origins of the New South*, which appeared six years later, has stood the test of time so well.

IV.

The Age of Jackson secured Schlesinger's fame, but it did not complete his political education. That would come in the late 1940s, in his battles not with pro-banking conservatives or consensus scholars but with the Communist and fellow-traveling Left. Those were the battles that culminated in his deeply admirable and deeply misunderstood book of 1949, *The Vital Center*.

The events of the time are familiar enough to anyone with a passing awareness of postwar American liberal politics. Schlesinger was, characteristically, in the middle of many of those events—notably the founding of Americans for Democratic Action as an antidote to the Communist-influenced Progressive Citizens of America, which ran Henry Wallace for president against Harry Truman in 1948. Schlesinger's recollections of the campaign of 1948 ought to be required reading for anyone who might still have a soft spot for the pro-Wallace "anti-anti-Communists" or who might still talk sneeringly of "Cold War liberals." So should his writings from the time, such as this little disquisition on the fellow-traveler:

> For the most chivalrous reasons, he cannot believe that ugly facts underlie fair words. However he looks at it, for example, the USSR keeps coming through as a kind of enlarged Brook Farm community, complete with folk dancing in native costumes, joyous work in the fields and progressive kindergartens. Nothing in his system has prepared him for Stalin.

It is as intellectual autobiography that the later chapters of the book are most revealing, especially about the impact of Reinhold Niebuhr on Schlesinger's thinking. The connection began inauspiciously in the winter of 1940-1941. One cold Sunday, Schlesinger's formidable bride, Marian Cannon, insisted that he accompany her to Memorial Church in Harvard Yard, and listen to a guest sermon by Niebuhr, then a professor at the Union Theological Seminary. Schlesinger had heard of the ex-socialist, neo-Augustinian theologian from Perry Miller, but it was not enough to get him excited. "[T]he last thing I felt I needed was a dose of evangelical religion," Schlesinger writes, "and I abandoned the Sunday papers and the fireside under protest."

But the preacher turned out to be impressive, eyes flashing and voice booming, as he delivered the uncomfortable lesson that, though man was flawed and sinful, he still had a duty to combat evil in the world—which meant, in 1940-1941, joining the continuing struggle in Europe. Niebuhr's anti-isolationism seemed sound enough, but his theological views took longer to sink in. To Cambridge liberals like himself, Schlesinger recounts, "[t]he notion of original sin seemed a historical, even a hysterical, curiosity that had gone out with hard-shell Calvinism." The two did not meet until the founding of the Americans for Democratic Action at the Willard Hotel six years later (where Schlesinger discovered that the imposing deity turned out to be a direct, approachable, and humorous man). The political alliance led to a strong friendship—and to Schlesinger's immersion in Niebuhr's writings.

Schlesinger is a historian with something of a blind spot about American religion, and he never kindled to Niebuhr's theological presentations; but he was profoundly impressed by two of Niebuhr's ideas. The first was Niebuhr's conception of man's mixed moral nature, and of the human illusion, born of original sin, that man can overcome his finite nature. The second was Niebuhr's dissection of the great modern fallacy that redemption could be achieved in history. Together, these two arguments gave Schlesinger, the liberal with Progressive roots, a humbler and more tragic view of the world, an acute and pained awareness of how catastrophes can proceed from overweening good intentions.

From Niebuhr, Schlesinger learned what he needed to comprehend, finally, about how the radical evils of Nazism and Communism could exist in the modern world. And from Niebuhr, he also learned what he needed to complete the intellectual journey that had begun with his Harvard essay on the would-be redeemer Orestes Brownson. Above all, Schlesinger took from Niebuhr's moral realism a strenghthened liberal and democratic resolve. Whereas for centuries theocrats, including American theocrats, had used the doctrine of original sin to justify tyrannical rule over a wicked humanity, Niebuhr drew exactly the opposite conclusion. If all men were flawed, as Niebuhr saw it, then no man and no group of men could be trusted with too much power. Instead of a rationale for concentrated authority, Niebuhr's religion (in Schlesinger's secularized understanding of it) demanded the dispersal of authority. Or, as Niebuhr wrote, "Man's capacity for justice makes democracy possible; but man's inclination to injustice makes democracy necessary"—a sentence that Schlesinger still cherishes.

Once Henry Wallace had been safely turned aside, and Harry Truman was elected in the White House, Schlesinger poured what he learned from Niebuhr and from the early Cold War into a tract for the times, which he called *The Vital Center*. Over the years, the book's title has become an all-purpose platitude that has been used as everything from a left-wing codeword for spinelessness to a political slogan roughly equivalent to Bill Clinton's "Third Way." (Indeed, Clinton likes to invoke "the vital center" as a name for his own political flexibility; and Schlesinger

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notes with amusement that even Newt Gingrich once found an occasion to quote the book approvingly.) Schlesinger rightly insists, however, on the term's proper meaning: a call, in a particular and perilous time, for an alliance of the non-fascist right and the non-communist left, one that would lead, he wrote, to "the triumph of those who believe deeply in civil liberties, in constitutional processes and in the democratic determination of political and economic policies."

By an alliance, Schlesinger by no means envisaged a collapse of liberalism and conservativism into each other, which would create what might be better called the dead center. (Here and there in the book, he made perfectly clear that his allegiances were with what he called, alternatively, "the new radicalism" and "the free left.") His idea, given the very real threats that communism and fascism posed to human liberty, was that both conservatives and liberals had to draw strict lines, beyond which neither side would go—agreeing to battle each other hard but without succumbing to totalitarian temptations. "The totalitarians regard the toleration of conflict as our central weakness," he wrote in one of the book's many tough, sterling passages.

> So it may appear to be in an age of anxiety. But we know it to be basically our central strength. The new radicalism derives its power from an acceptance of conflict—an acceptance combined with a determination to create a social framework where conflict issues, not in excessive anxiety, but in creativity....The new radicalism, drawing strength from a realistic conception of man, dedicates itself to problems as they come, attacking them in terms which best secure the freedom and fulfillment of the individual. It believes in attack—and out of attack will come passionate intensity.

The Vital Center made ample use of Schlesinger's historical researches (as well as, in the preceding passage and in its title, Yeats's "The Second Coming" which had not yet been leveled to cliché); but the book was a liberal battle cry, not a work of history. Indeed, it was one of the most effective liberal battle cries of the past century. With its publication, Schlesinger could begin to claim a piece of George Bancroft's mantle, as one who tried to make history as well as to write it. And here, fittingly, Schlesinger breaks off his memoir's first volume.

He has much more to tell us in the volumes to come, about politics as well as history, from the first Stevenson campaign in 1952 to the campaign against Bill Clinton's impeachment and removal in 1998. There will be stories of intellectuals aplenty, and of their noisy reversals and bitter feuds. But in those boisterous tales of betrayal and second thoughts, Schlesinger will remain the resolute liberal, at once hopeful and tragic—the liberal that he had become by 1950. The most affecting passage of his book comes near its end, in an unassuming little paragraph:

> It is, I suppose, evidence of lack of imagination or of some other infirmity of character, but I am somewhat embarrassed to confess that I have not radically altered my general outlook in the more than half a century since *The Vital Center*'s publication. Perhaps I should apologize for not being able to claim disillusions, revelations, conversions. But in fact I have not been born again, and there it is.

Schlesinger knows too much of his century's miserable history not to understand, and to admire, the tempestuous careers of some of its intellectuals. And yet there is a foundation in reality also for his impatience with his era of intellectual lurchings. Here is a man who teaches by example that foolish *in*consistency, too, is a hobgoblin of the mind. Schlesinger has been the very opposite of Orestes Brownson, of an "intellectually displaced person wandering passionately from one system to another until he came to relative rest." He chose early in his life to resist all forms of totalistic and apocalyptic thinking, and so his thinking has been refreshingly free of instability and melodrama.

His liberalism has made him steady, and immune to hysteria, and unsurprisable. It is not a small accomplishment, to be unsurprisable without being dour; but that is liberalism's great philosophical ingenuity, to combine a sense of life's pain with a sense of life's possibility. Liberalism, say its critics, has rattled us by robbing us of our absolutes and leaving us to our freedoms; but it may turn out that it is liberalism that offers the best basis not only for a decent life, but also for a steady life. All this has been demonstrated by Arthur Schlesinger Jr.'s extraordinary personal history. ■

The Beltway Boy

By JAMES WOLCOTT

Ghost Light by Frank Rich

(Random House, 339 pp., $24.95)

SEVEN YEARS AFTER stepping down as chief drama critic of *The New York Times*, Frank Rich is still giving his regards to Broadway. That Broadway isn't giving them back does not seem to daunt him. If anything, it has made Rich even more determined to watercolor his controversial tenure—the feuds with producers, playwrights, and fellow critics; the accusations of playing favorites and letting power balloon his head—as a fine romance, a tempestuous affair that sometimes got messy. Whatever pain he inflicted as the "Butcher of Broadway" was rooted in ardent devotion. If sometimes he came down too hard on a show, it was because he cared too much.

In "Exit the Critic," a valedictory essay that he wrote for *The New York Times Magazine*, Rich reported a phone conversation that he had with Joseph Papp, the producer and former chief of the New York Shakespeare Festival, with whom he had often squabbled. Papp, who was dying of cancer, had called to offer condolences on the death of Rich's mother. "I want you to know," he told Rich, offering absolution, "that even when I was angry at you I always knew you loved the theater." *Ghost Light*, Rich's coming-of-age memoir, traces this love back to the original ticket stub as the butcher trades in his meat cleaver for a magic wand. His model is Moss Hart's *Act One*: his middle name is Hart, Rich informs us, "and my dreams were the young Moss Hart's dreams." With a tap, he returns us to a more innocent time, a more innocent America, a more innocent Frank Rich.

"To be an American kid in the fifties was to live in a sparkling, hopeful world where ignorance really was bliss," Rich

JAMES WOLCOTT is a contributing editor at *Vanity Fair* and author of the novel *The Catsitters*, to be published by Harper Collins next spring.

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writes, striking a David Halberstam chord. "Parents spoke in euphemistic private codes rather than say anything that might mar the tableaux of contentment they tirelessly constructed for wide young eyes." Raised in Somerset, an affluent section of Washington, D.C., the Rich family—mom, dad, Frank, and sister Polly—appeared to lead the perfect picture-tube life. "Not unlike Lucy and Desi, Mom and Dad had moved from their small newlyweds' apartment in the city to their first house right after I was born." He attended a redbrick elementary school, watched the Mousketeers each afternoon, joined the Cub Scouts, and had a cute dog. "Polly and I had named our little black mongrel Patty because we liked to pat her."

In Rich's telling, his childhood was so typical it was archetypal—a Pleasantville version of pastoral complete with the standard props of suburban consumption (station wagons, Davy Crockett coonskin caps, Wonder bread). Each night families would gather in the living room to watch blander replicas of themselves. "If there was a man in the moon—the opening credits of one of our favorite TV programs, *The Honeymooners*, promised us one—what would he make of these look-alike families in their look-alike homes staring each night at other look-alike families in their own look-alike homes on small cathode-ray tubes burning through the inky shadows of our living rooms?"

Nothing this goody-goody can last. As Rich flips through his scrapbook of Kodak moments, we wait for the anvil to drop on this tableau of contentment, awakening the white zombies from their trance. After all, every silver lining in the 1950s had an atomic cloud, and scores of films, novels, memoirs, cultural studies, and musicals (Leonard Bernstein's *Trouble in Tahiti*) have taught us that behind the Necco-wafer façade of suburban conformity lurk moths in the closets, gnawing discontents, soul-sick malaise. So it comes as less of a surprise to the reader than it did to the young Frank when Lucy and Desi announce their separation, snapping his childhood in two.

Whatever was eating his parents' marriage was kept from the kids (citing *The Honeymooners* again, Rich notes that his parents never fought like the Kramdens), making it harder for them to pin down a motive, a final straw. The initial shock and disruption are soon followed by rage, fear, and shame. To be a child of divorce in the 1950s was to be singled out and marked down—cut from the cast of the American Dream. The sitcom hijinks of happy families now seem a cruel mockery to Rich, who tells anyone who will listen that *Father Knows Best* is boring, the Anderson kids total drips. "What I wouldn't admit—even to myself—was that each episode of the show that everyone loved was an acute reminder that I was different, in a family unlike any other family I knew in life or on television." This feeling of being set aside dogs him through school and summer camp, where he eats by himself at the losers' end of the picnic table and earns dweeb status by "becoming the star of the woodworking period."

Frank Rich by Steve Brodner for The New Republic

When Rich's mother meets a new man, a divorced lawyer named Joel Fisher with kids of his own, there is the hope that a new family album can be pasted together. At first glimpse, Fisher resembles one of those sloppy oddballs who heaves rude life into Anne Tyler's novels. "A huge man stood in the lot only a few feet from where we parked, as if he'd been lying in wait for us. He was wearing a florid madras shirt and baggy shorts. His eyes seemed to pop out at us from behind boxy, black-rimmed eyeglasses." But Rich's future stepfather proves to be a more tormented twister than any of Tyler's crazy-quilt misfits. A vulgar bully, he picks fights, he lies (calling himself a doctor when he makes reservations because, as he explains to Frank, "doctors are always treated like kings, even when they're schmucks"), he browbeats waiters and waitresses, he feasts like a Viking ("sauce and pieces of meat ... dribbled out of his mouth, onto his lips and chin"), and he blankets the room with rolling-thunder waves of flatulence.

Worst of all, he is a physical abuser, cuffing Rich and once throwing him down the stairs, and cowing his mother with tantrums that shake the house. "Mom would quickly excuse herself, leaving Polly and me to eat alone while she climbed up to her bedroom to collapse. 'Oh, that Mr. Fisher!' Willie Mae always said, like a comic maid on a TV show, as if the tension could be suffused with a joke." By this time, Rich's theme that life badly mimics television hardly needs reiteration. (The stepfather's headstrong recklessness eventually costs Rich's mother her life. An unlicensed driver prone to accidents, Joel crashes the car following a Fourth of July lunch in 1991, injuring himself and killing her.)

Rich's escape hatch from this ulcer ward is the singing-dancing wonderland of the Broadway musical, whose brassy strains awaken his sense of wonder and arouse precocious longings. He listens to *The Pajama Game* after school, his mother floating in from the kitchen during the overture and popping in later at key moments. "The music, our shared affection for it, became a private language of the afternoon, a whole vocabulary of joy." Later, captivated by Lola, the leggy vamp in *Damn Yankees* ("Whatever Lola Wants, Lola Gets"), he tries to piece together a complete woman based on his sketchy knowledge of the female form. "With time, I gathered enough clues from

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every conceivable source to concoct an attenuated unveiling of Lola's obscured anatomy. On those nights, wide-awake, I rocked myself to sleep with my undressed Lola—if, that is, I could be certain that Polly was already asleep below me, insensate to the sound of creaking bedsprings. Lola became the company I was so hungry to find in the dark, if only just long enough to guide me into the oblivion I craved."

SUCH BURNING DESIRES are too consuming to be satisfied by listening to cast albums and catching road-company productions in Washington. Rich must make a pilgrimage to the promised land of Broadway itself, the marquee'd Mecca of his dreams. His mother takes him and his sister to New York, where they see Judy Holliday in *Bells Are Ringing*, but the bells that he hears loudest are the ones ringing in his head. "Looking up, looking up to the Shubert Theatre sign with its bulbs spelling out Judy Holliday's name, looking up as high as I could above all of New York's tall buildings, I felt that the night itself, which had terrorized me for so long, was just where I was meant to be."

This excelsior moment gives birth to a litter of awestruck poses, as Rich grows giddier and giddier—

> How could any Broadway show have any unsold tickets? It made no sense, and it was hard to imagine actors, the actors on my records, performing one of my favorite musicals to a theater with empty seats, with empty rows of seats. How could there not be enough people to fill every theater when New York has more people than any other place in the world? Who could pass a Broadway show without going in?
>
> If only I could follow *Carnival!* to Broadway, my own suitcase in hand like Lili when she joins the circus, and be with it every night.
>
> But my disappointment galloped forward anyway; I didn't know how I'd get through this Saturday night. The thought of *Bye Bye Birdie* playing its last performance in Washington without me seemed unbearable. How could the actors in whom I had invested all my affection that afternoon now go on as if I had never known them? How could they be so fickle as to give the same performance for a whole new audience from which I was excluded?

—until he lands a job as a ticket-taker at Washington's National Theater. No longer on the outside looking in, he has been handed a backstage pass to paradise.

> There was a line at the box office—*Pickwick*, produced by David Merrick, was SRO—and I walked past it as if I had graduated from that lowly station forever. I pushed open one of the chrome doors to the inner lobby and slipped inside as if I were an actor walking past autograph-seekers through a stage door. I had always wondered what people meant when they talked about crying out of happiness—it was a non sequitur in my household—but now I understood. I felt as I had at the end of *King Lear*—as if some powerful, nameless spirit were rising within me, raising my whole being to a more elevated place, the sort of heaven people talked about in religious school but that I had never glimpsed before.

ON A CULTURAL level, the unabashed enthusiasm of *Ghost Light* is refreshing. Years ago Kenneth Tynan remarked to Clive James that "I still get a thrill every time the curtain goes up", to which James quipped, "I get a thrill every time it goes down." Journalistic opinion over the last few decades has sided with the Australian crocodile. Since the French new wave and the rampaging campaigns of Pauline Kael, Andrew Sarris, and others, it has become de rigueur to moon over the moviegoing experience as the only hip game in town, the movie theater itself endowed with heavy mojo as an all-purpose womb/dream chamber/sensual hot tub/Plato's cave. Theatergoing cannot compete with such peepshow ravishments. Laden with the slouch of middle-aged squares, blue-haired ladies at sleepy matinées, and Arthur Miller platitudes chiseled on stale cheese, it has no intellectual, psychosexual cachet. (The disdain of movie critics to the theater found its dourest expression in David Denby's report for *The Atlantic* in which he conducted a tour of top Broadway shows and couldn't wait to rush back to the popcorn.)

As someone who has come to prefer theater to the movies—in large part because the stage is the only place where you can see actors at full stretch, movie acting having become increasingly bitty and canned and indicative, each gesture and line-reading making a neat point—I appreciate Rich's sticking up for the old dowager. It is rare today for a writer to own up to being a theater buff in his boyhood, collecting *Playbills* and poring over the theater listings as if they were Racing Form touts. It is even rarer for a straight male to be so smitten.

Rich presents himself as a girl-loving' guy, getting to first base on the day Kennedy was shot. ("You mean you used Kennedy's assassination as an excuse to feel up Linda?" a pal marvels. "That is genius!") But how many teenage boys frolic away the afternoon listening to show tunes? While other guys his age were accompanying Jimi Hendrix on air guitar, Rich was parting the mists in search of *Brigadoon*. There has been a recent bull market in literature on the Broadway musical as a gay crucible (such as D.A. Miller's *Place for Us*), and the peculiar slant of *Ghost Light* is that it is a textbook homosexual coming-of-age story, minus the homosexuality. It has all of the classic elements: the fierce attachment to the mother, the absent or abusive father, the love of schmaltz and artifice, the stigma of being "different." The only thing missing is Auntie Mame cocking a cigarette holder. (In a recent episode of "Will & Grace," a young, still-closeted Will disputed that he was gay, to which Jack, sliding an album cover out of a stack, responded: "Oh, really? This well-worn copy of the *Dreamgirls* soundtrack begs to differ.")

Twice married, a father, Rich is unquestionably heterosexual, but his sensibility possesses a gay gene, as evidenced by his crusading push for gay playwrights and gay themes as a reviewer (even taking his two sons to *Falsettos*, converting one of them to the cause: "Isaac's own transformation into a knowing proselytizer for gay rights has been a fast one"), and the lurid martyrology of Matthew Shepard in his op-ed column in the *Times*. This is a rather unique perspective that he does not examine nearly enough. The confessions of a straight theater queen might have made for fun reading, and provided a catchy angle for a memoir that falls too often into standard baby-boom nostalgia. When Frank discovers soul music, you want to pull a sweater up over your head.

SMOOTHLY WRITTEN, unfailingly fair, deeply affectionate in its portraiture of the teachers and the mentors who encouraged its author, *Ghost Light*—its title taken from a theater superstition about keeping an empty stage illuminated to ward off spirits—cannot overcome the fundamental handicap of having been written from the viewpoint of a lifelong spectator, not a player. As a lifelong member of the audience, Rich is always at one remove from the main action. He tries to dynamize his bystander status by jacking up the logistics of getting to the theater into breathless action sequences ("once on the street I put Jennie out of my mind and ran full-speed to *She Loves Me*, arriving just in time to get a three-dollar balcony seat as the show was starting," "then I was off, racing like a New Yorker down a sunlit Forty-Fourth Street, into the Shubert

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lobby"), but this is not the same as being on stage, a participant in the creative mix. (This is where *Ghost Light* departs from *Act One*: Moss Hart did graduate from a dogsbody to become a producer's assistant, an actor, and a playwright.)

But it is not only the stage that Rich loves to watch. Adding another layer of detachment for the reader is the mirror reflection that Rich spies in so much of what he sees. *The Music Man*: "The boy in the show was called Winthrop, and there was something about him, besides his age, that reminded me of me." *Gypsy*: "Almost every song seemed to describe a fragment of my own life..." And so on. He goes to the theater less for transcendence than for doses of therapy. Each yellow *Playbill* cover is a falling leaf in Rich's journey to find himself. Time and again he stands trembling on the threshold of his own promising tomorrow, awaiting his cue. It comes when he is accepted at Harvard. Arriving at Cambridge, his anxieties disperse like sun-broken clouds. His own act two has begun. To cap this momentous day, he attends a play in Boston that same night. It's his way of giving himself a hug. "When, a couple of hours later, I got off the MTA at Tremont Street, I seemed to float down the hill to the theater on sheer anticipation, possessed by all the possibilities of the world that were mine at last."

The royal carpet that Rich rolls out for himself leads to the power and the glory of *The New York Times*. Implicit in the pages of this book is the reader's understanding that the boychik who gazed starry-eyed at Broadway's neon signs and saw his destiny—someday all this will be mine!—actually got his way. Indeed, *Ghost Light* functions as a prequel to *Hot Seat*, the mammoth collection of his *Times* reviews that appeared in 1998. (Over one thousand pages long, that tome aspires to be an historical record, surveying each season of Rich's administration.) Although Rich first notched a name for himself as a film critic in the pages of *New Times*, the *New York Post*, and *Time*, one of the many go-karters chasing Pauline Kael's dust at *The New Yorker*, he has downplayed that segment of his career to make his vocation as a theater critic seem pre-ordained, the climax of his narrative arc.

As Rich recounts in *Hot Seat*, his own debut at the *Times* entered Broadway legend. Banged up in a car accident, he was pressed into reviewing *42nd Street* on opening night when the show's madman producer David Merrick canceled the previews. After the show, Rich is told that the musical's choreographer, Gower Champion, has just died. It is his Woodstein moment. "Had I been handed the scoop of the century? Or was I the patsy in another fabled Merrick hoax?" Rich scurries back to the office and bats out his review like a pilot trying to land in a crippled plane. Physically and emotionally spent after turning in his copy, he weeps out of grief for Champion. "I had never met him, but I took the loss personally anyway..." Of course he does! He takes everything personally! On the basis of his deadline heroics, Rich is hired as the paper's chief drama critic—"living proof of [*42nd Street*'s] undying Broadway legend, the understudy who went out a nobody and came back a star."

How Rich used his stardom became a source of controversy. Anyone throwing around the muscle of the *Times* is bound to provoke fear and loathing, but Rich seemed to go overboard to make his word the final say. (He would sometimes pan a show a second time in an "Arts & Leisure" essay, as if pumping a few more bullets into the body for insurance.) He was smart, funny, and plugged in, no question; but he was also flush with a yuppie's cushy sense of having arrived. Compared to the wry modesty of Walter Kerr, or the elegant stitchwork of Kenneth Tynan, his prose was a promotional hard sell, the slams and the raves carrying the same hear-ye, hear-ye cry.

He made himself, that is, the main attraction. (Which is why reading *Hot Seat* is so wearying: the fever pitch of his reviews seldom varies.) When his second wife, Alex Witchel, began to write the paper's "On Stage, and Off" column, they became a tag-team act, a sneak preview of the Bill and Hillary co-presidency, and just as rife with intrigue. The strongest protest against this duopoly was lodged in these pages by Robert Brustein, whose article "An Embarrassment of Riches" argued that "this one-two punch by a husband-and-wife team covering the same art... is a significant element in the growing abuse of power at *The New York Times*—and I'm referring not to nepotism but to the consolidation of opinion. Rich favorites and friends are regularly featured in Witchel's accounts of farewell dinners and television appearances.... If Rich scorns the presentations of a new resident company such as the National Actors Theater, Witchel follows up with an unfriendly story about how its director, Tony Randall, is withholding free tickets from 700 Tony voters (which may be the only right thing that Randall is doing)."

When Brustein's piece appeared, the teeth-gnashing in the theater community was so loud that even "60 Minutes," a complete yokel when it comes to the arts, felt compelled to investigate. Rich

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defended himself by calling the carping against his wife sexist and giving instances of shows he had panned that managed to thrive, and shows he had praised that had flopped. He fooled no one. And after fifteen seasons of seeing more theater than any sane person ought, he bid farewell, taking his leave with a review of *Perestroika*, Tony Kushner's follow-up to *Angels in America*. Once again identifying with what was happening on stage as a stand-in for his own state of mind, Rich found the most indelible image in the play to be the final wave to the audience from a character dying from AIDS. "So I wrote about the frail young man's buoyant wave, and, after I did, I realized that his good-bye was also my own...."

SINCE THEN HE has been mopping up the bad blood left behind. In the afterword to *Hot Seat*, he describes the cooling of hostilities between himself and Brustein, among others. But not everyone is willing to declare bygones. The English playwright David Hare, who had a conniption after Rich's show-closing pan of *The Secret Rapture* (a quarrel that *Variety* immortalized with the headline RUFFLED HARE AIRS RICH BITCH), scoffed at Rich's charm offensive and snorted at his account of Joe Papp's deathbed pardon. "To retail the story stinks of bad conscience," Hare wrote in *Acting Up*, the engrossing diary that he kept during the making of his one-man show *Via Dolorosa*. He judges Rich's career at the *Times* to be a failure of character, his "terrific critical gift... corrupted by power."

"Like Cain," Hare wrote, "he is condemned to wander the op-ed pages for ever in the hopeless search for a subject. And, sadly, he is still writing articles trying to prove he's a nice guy, really." Hare was right. Deprived of his seat on the aisle, Rich is now a writer without portfolio, another pundit among many. His political commentary on the op-ed page of the *Times* and in its Sunday magazine is his latest exercise in spectatorship. Reading him is like watching a bank of TV monitors with a channel surfer trying to discern a pattern in the scrambled images, an electronic mosaic flashing a coded political message. Rich has traded in the proscenium arch for a galaxy of pixels.

Far be it from me to look askance at someone else's showbiz astrology—I have my own devotions to "Angel," "C.S.I.," and "Seinfeld" reruns. The problem is not that Rich juggles politics as pop culture and pop culture as politics, but that he puts them on the same plane of relevance, the same light-gravity field. His enthusiasms and his hostilities have no memorable hold because they have so little grounding in real life, in personal experience, in firsthand reporting, in culturally unfiltered responses.

Having no feel for lived religion, for example, Rich cannot write about Christian fundamentalists or the Promise Keepers without bottling them as alien specimens. (Norman Mailer had nothing in common with country-club Republicans, but his X-ray exams of Goldwater and Rockefeller supporters were as psychologically and socially charged as Dickens's character sketches.) He writes about politicians as if they were Bread and Puppet theater figures, papier-mâché heads attached to sticks. He may live in New York City, but his is a Beltway perspective executed in primary colors. Maybe that is why he loves to bash the Beltway. His sole constituency is his fellow pundits and the other political junkies piping Don Imus into their coffins each dawn. (Rich is an Imus regular.)

Ghost Writer is a showcase for Rich's nice-guy qualities, shaded with sorrow and autumnal wisdom. "The theater had showered me with love, but I had yet to learn how to love anything but it." By baring his vulnerable inner child (his baby butcher), he is trying to establish a personal history that will help soften the critical legacy and secure him a more sympathetic place in the theatrical annals. *Hot Seat* is the voluminous monument, *Ghost Light* the memorial flame. But I don't see Broadway naming a theater after Frank Rich anytime soon, as it has for his predecessors Brooks Atkinson and Walter Kerr. It is too early for nostalgia, and his image makeover comes too late. Rich will just have to find another way to get his name up in lights. ■

Black Milk of Language

By RUTH FRANKLIN

PAUL CELAN: SELECTED POEMS AND PROSE
translated by John Felstiner
(W.W. Norton, 272 pp., $13.95)

THREADSUNS
by Paul Celan
translated from the German
and with an introduction
by Pierre Joris
(Sun and Moon Press, 426 pp., $29.95)

GLOTTAL STOP:
101 POEMS BY PAUL CELAN
translated by Nikolai Popov
and Heather McHugh
(Wesleyan University Press, 192 pp., $24.95)

I.

A TENSE DEBATE has long existed about the translation of poetry. One view was epitomized by Vladimir Nabokov, who fiercely believed that only literal paraphrase, supported by copious commentary, can do justice to a poem in translation. As he once quipped:

> What is translation? On a platter
> A poet's pale and glaring head,
> A parrot's screech, a monkey's chatter,
> And profanation of the dead.

The opposing view has been championed by George Steiner, who agrees that perfect translation, of either poetry or prose, is impossible—but concludes more pessimistically that, in the most exact sense, nothing can truly be transmitted by translation, because different systems of grammar have different ways of signifying, even with regard to the simplest words or phrases. Steiner describes various languages as nets piled atop one another, overlapping in some places but disjunctive at others: "No two languages mesh perfectly, no two languages ... see the world in the same order."

But it is a simple fact that we require translations in order to be able to read texts in foreign languages, since no human being could possibly master all the world's tongues. (There might even be something inhuman about such a person.) And so we must develop a practical approach to translation. Perfect translation may not be possible, but still it must be attempted, because paraphrase cannot suffice: it communicates the meaning of a poem, but not the experience of reading it. All sense of its form, its rhythm, its music, is lost. And so, borrowing an image from mathematics, if one imagines that the original text is the straight line of an asymptote, then the translation is the curve that veers toward

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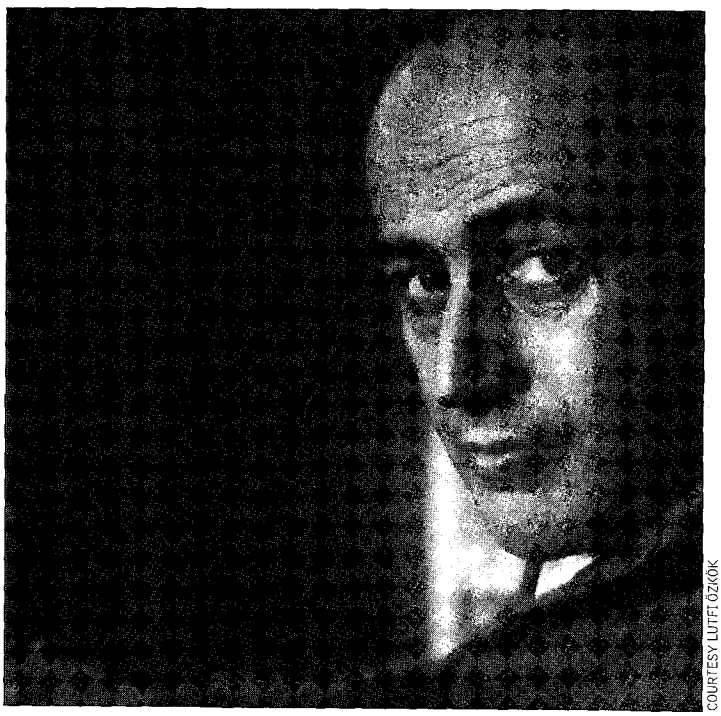
it. The translator walks a tightrope along this curve, intent on drawing as close as possible to the unattainable straight line. And there is literary honor in the attempt.

Paul Celan—a poet notoriously difficult to translate and also one of the most frequently translated postwar poets—believed in the possibility of translating poetry. He first published the poem that has become his most famous work, "Deathfugue," in a newspaper in Bucharest, translated from German into Romanian. And over the course of his lifetime he translated poems by more than twenty writers in seven languages. This work acted as a counterpoint to Celan's own writing, coexisting with it and sometimes taking its place when the composition of his own verse proved too difficult. Out of some poets' work he translated only a single poem; he worked on others, such as Mandelstam, for years, establishing in the process a profound intellectual kinship.

Celan believed in translation because he lived his life in translation. Born in 1920 in Bukovina, a former province of the Austro-Hungarian Empire then under Romanian control, he grew up hearing Romanian, Yiddish, and Hebrew in addition to his Jewish parents' native German, the only language that was spoken in his childhood home. After the catastrophic events of the Holocaust—his parents were killed in a death camp, and Celan himself spent several years in a labor camp in Romania—he passed through Bucharest and Vienna before settling in Paris, where he remained until his suicide in 1970. Though he would eventually become proficient in more than half a dozen languages, and though he never lived permanently in any German-speaking country, throughout his life Celan wrote his poetry exclusively in German.

Much has been made, rightly, of Celan's torturous relationship to the German language—"the mother tongue that was both his and the murderers'," in the words of John Felstiner. In his biographical study *Paul Celan: Poet, Survivor, Jew*, Felstiner described Celan's voice as "alien" and identified the Holocaust as the source of his poetic language: "That mouth, after the wartime 'darknesses,' resisted simple speech." Celan's work, filled with neologisms and the compound words to which German is uniquely amenable, is often viewed as defying translation, especially the later poems, which often include words and phrases in French, Latin, Hebrew, even gibberish. Combined with Celan's arcane and technical vocabulary, which draws on sources as disparate as anatomy, botany, and Jewish mysticism, this polyglotism is seen by many critics as approaching or even epitomizing untranslatability. "What will always remain untranslatable into any other language is the marked difference of languages in [a] poem," Derrida wrote in "Shibboleth: For Paul Celan."

But Celan in no way viewed poetry, even his own poetry, as inseparable from its original language. Quite the opposite. By working so exhaustively in other languages, Celan was able to "approach [German] with therapeutic dispassion as a raw material fatally his own yet also contingent and potentially hostile," in Steiner's words. "It becomes a 'meta-German' cleansed of historical-political dirt and thus, alone, usable by a profoundly Jewish voice after the Holocaust." Celan's brilliantly idiosyncratic German was the product not only of tragedy but also of sensibility, and of the life's work that succeeded tragedy. Through his intensive engagement with Russian, French, and English verse—Celan's translations occupy two thick volumes of his five-book *Collected Works*—Celan's own language, like that of any serious poet-translator, was richly altered and expanded.



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Paul Celan, Paris, 1963

But the influence flowed also in the other direction: Celan's German inevitably transformed the works that he translated. He rendered only poems that were consonant with his own poetic goals and his own use of language. And while his translations are faithful—sometimes remarkably faithful—reflections of the texts on which they are based, they are also reflections of Celan's own primary obsession, which was coming to terms with the incomprehensible violence and loss that he experienced during the Holocaust.

A look at one of Celan's translations from English shows how the poet's translations worked as an offshoot of his own poetics. In 1959, Celan published a translation of Emily Dickinson's "Because I Could Not Stop for Death." The poem is famous enough that there is no need to repeat it; but here is the first stanza:

> Because I could not stop for Death—
> He kindly stopped for me—
> The Carriage held but just
> Ourselves—
> And Immortality.

Dickinson displaces Death to the end of the first line—just one example of the obliqueness that characterizes the entire poem's relationship with death—but in Celan's version Death begins the poem: "Death, because I could not stop/Stopped, was gladly prepared" (this is my own literal translation). This forthrightness is also evident in Celan's stripping the translation of Dickinson's emblematic end-of-line dashes; his poem is punctuated normally. Celan was apparently unable to solve the conundrum of how to render Dickinson's idiosyncratic use of capital letters in German, which calls for the capitalization of all nouns; his capitalization, like his punctuation, is standard, which also removes some of the strangeness of the original.

The straightforwardness with which Celan treats death in the beginning of Dickinson's poem has dramatic consequences in the last stanza:

> Since then—'tis Centuries—but each
> Feels shorter than the Day
> I first surmised the Horses Heads
> Were toward Eternity—

This is Celan's version (again translated literally):

> Centuries since then, but none
> was longer than the moment
> when I said to myself: So we are heading
> toward eternity!

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The "day" in which Dickinson's speaker grasps what is taking place is shortened by Celan to a "moment"—which is, paradoxically, lengthened by his reversal of the trope. Rather than the centuries feeling short, it is the moment that grows long. More importantly, Celan is unable to allow himself the circumspection with which Dickinson approaches death, which finds its culmination in her last lines, with the weak verb "surmise," the indirect quotation of thought, and the unexpected and somewhat sinister image of the horses' heads. Celan's speaker surmises nothing. He speaks forthrightly to himself, and allows us to hear his language verbatim. "We," and no longer the horses, are headed toward eternity, and the poem's closing exclamation point brings the statement to a crashing culmination. Does it signify jubilation or fear? Our only clue is the terrifying duration of the moment of epiphany, longer than centuries.

Celan has managed to replicate the meter of the original exactly, and his ingenuity in reworking some of Dickinson's images to fit the confines of German is extraordinary. His rhyme scheme, too, is extremely close to the original, though he uses exact rhymes in each of the stanzas, while Dickinson emphasizes the poem's indirectness with slant rhymes in some instances. And though his German necessarily loses some of Dickinson's peculiarly nineteenth-century American vocabulary and phrasing, Celan pays her back with a subtle new pun: in the last lines he uses a verb for "heading toward," *zuhalten auf*, that includes the component "stop," *halten*. When this word, which appears in the poem's first line, shows up again, slightly disguised, it deftly reminds the reader of its earlier appearance.

Celan's skill in maintaining fidelity to the original in these aspects leads one to conclude that his divergence from it must be deliberate. For Celan, death was not oblique; and so he was unable to retain Dickinson's characteristic reticence and indirectness in his rendering of her poem. Technically speaking, his translation is brilliant; but if one judges a translation by the way in which it replicates not just the original's meaning and form but also its mood, it is not altogether successful. In the end, the translated poem has as much to do with Celan as with Dickinson.

CELAN'S INTEREST IN Dickinson did not end with "Because I Could Not Stop for Death"; he published translations of an additional half-dozen or so of her poems. At first glance, his affinity for her is puzzling. It is hard to imagine two more different poets than the perennially white-clad woman who rarely left her room and the exile who hardly knew what it was to have a native land. What could the isolated, inexperienced Dickinson, a "hermetic" poet if ever there was one, have to tell a Holocaust survivor about death?

In his introduction to *Selected Poems*, John Felstiner unwittingly answers this question through a question of his own:

> Would we, if somehow this were possible, trade Anne Frank's diary for her life, give up those salvaged pages to let her survive unscathed? And would we forgo Charlotte Salomon's ... autobiography in 760 watercolors, if in exchange she were not to perish in Auschwitz?... Why yes! it goes without saying. But the question involves something more. We cherish these creators specifically because of the diary or the paintings that an atrocious history impelled them to create. Undo that history, rewind the reel, and Anne Frank and Charlotte Salomon would not be quite the persons we wish to redeem.

Needless to say, Felstiner goes on to include Celan in this category.

His question is shockingly callous. Are we to "wish to redeem" the murdered artists more ardently than we wish to redeem the millions of murdered others? And Felstiner's question is also misguided. For it begins from the assumption that the suffering, not the artist, created these works, or at least "impelled" their creation. But the Holocaust did not make great artists out of ordinary Jews; it provided the impetus for those who were already great souls to express themselves in art. Celan's work "belongs inseparably to its ground, its terrible cost," Felstiner writes—but this, too, is mistaken. Celan's suffering was not the currency with which he paid for his work. What if the cost had been greater, and he had been sent to a death camp rather than to perform forced labor? Would the poetry that he got in exchange have been that much more beautiful?

Poetry about pain, when it is genuine poetry, is never only the expression of pain, or only its result. That is why the recluse in genteel Amherst could teach the survivor of *l'univers concentrationnaire* something about death: because the Holocaust did not entirely create Celan any more than nineteenth-century New England entirely created Dickinson. And Dickinson understood as much, as another lyric (which Celan also translated) reveals:

> I never saw a Moor—
> I never saw the Sea—
> Yet know I how the Heather looks
> And what a wave must be.
>
> I never spoke with God—
> Nor visited in Heaven—
> Yet certain am I of the spot
> As if the chart were given—

Characteristically, Celan's version omits the word "Heaven." But still he manages to smooth out the last stanza's paradox:

> Nor have I yet spoken with God,
> I've never been there,
> and know the place, as if I had
> already read the map.

With the simple replacement of "yet" with "and," Celan both underscores Dickinson's point and negates any perplexity associated with it: why, he would ask, is it a stretch to believe that one can understand something of which one has no empirical knowledge? We do not discount Dickinson's poetry about death as a consequence of the fact that she had little personal experience with death or, indeed, limited engagement with the outside world; and we cannot validate Celan's poetry with the fact that he experienced and survived the Holocaust. History and personal experience are neither the ultimate authority for the poetry, nor the crutch. And the poetry does not require such validation. The poetry stands on its own. Art really is that strong.

II.

MICHAEL HAMBURGER'S *Poems of Paul Celan*, first published in 1980, marked the first appearance of a reasonably broad collection of Celan's work in English. At the time of its publication, Hamburger's book, which included selections from all nine of Celan's published volumes of poetry—from the romantic early lyrics of *Poppy and Memory* (*Mohn und Gedächtnis*, 1952) to the obscurities of the posthumously published *Homestead of Time* (*Zeitgehöft*, 1976)—was rightly acknowledged as the definitive version of Celan in English. (The only book Hamburger left out, the early volume *Sand from the Urns* (*Der Sand aus den Urnen*), Celan himself had withdrawn from circulation, and many poems from it were included in *Poppy and Memory*.) Joachim Neugroschel had published a translation of Celan's poems in 1970, and others had appeared in various journals and anthologies, but before Hamburger no single volume gave Celan the comprehensive treatment that he deserved. Since then, other and smaller translations of Celan's poetry have appeared (including Margret Guillemin and Katherine Washburn's *Last Poems*, a selection of previously

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unpublished poetry, and Pierre Joris's *Breathturn*, the first English translation of an entire volume of Celan's). Still, until the appearance of Felstiner's *Paul Celan: Poet, Survivor, Jew* in 1995, Hamburger was the only readily available English voice for the bulk of Celan's major work.

Felstiner's first Celan book was an interesting, if unwieldy, hybrid: a biography of the poet that interwove textual study and translations, mostly fragmentary, of more than two hundred of Celan's poems, major and minor. "Either a biographical or a textual study alone would miss Celan's reason for being," Felstiner wrote in the introduction, arguing that Celan's life and poetry are incomprehensible when separated. But what is most unusual about the book is that, in addition to the biographical and textual study, Felstiner also analyzes his own translations, sometimes in minute detail. Acknowledging and even celebrating the fact that translation involves an act of literary interpretation, Felstiner often provides elaborate explanations of why he chose a certain word or turn of phrase. "To grow attentive, especially in translating, is to activate these poems," he writes. "Their truth ... may consist in obscurity or ambiguity, as also in occasional radiance."

Felstiner's elucidations are an unusual resource for readers of his new book as well. He presents *Selected Poems and Prose of Paul Celan* as a continuation of the work that he began in the biography; he has revised and reprinted the poems that he translated in the earlier book, as well as finishing the poems that were previously presented as fragments. In the current volume, Felstiner has wisely decided to include the original German texts. In addition, he offers new translations of Celan's most important prose works, including his Bremen Literature Prize speech and his acceptance speech for the Georg Büchner Prize, the latter of which is widely perceived as his *ars poetica*. Although Felstiner's book covers much the same ground as Hamburger's, there is surprisingly little overlap between them. Felstiner, unlike Hamburger, includes selections from Celan's early poetry, published during the war years, and his uncollected last poems.

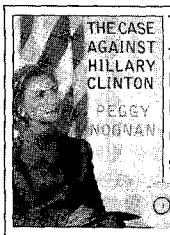
But Celan's touchstone poems, particularly "Deathfugue," have been translated many times over the past fifty years, and so a new translation must offer a compelling justification of its necessity. The happy news is that many of Felstiner's versions are eminently warranted. Generally, he is more attentive to Celan's poetic devices, which are often bound up in the peculiarities of German grammar, than Hamburger was, and more faithful to the original syntax in his English versions. The poem "Tenebrae," which illustrates Felstiner's accomplishment at its finest, is worth considering in its entirety:

> Near are we, Lord,
> near and graspable.
>
> Grasped already, Lord,
> clawed into each other, as if
> each of our bodies were
> your body, Lord.
>
> Pray, Lord,
> pray to us,
> we are near.
>
> Wind-skewed we went there,
> went there to bend
> over pit and crater.
>
> Went to the water-trough, Lord.
>
> It was blood, it was
> what you shed, Lord.
>
> It shined.
>
> It cast your image into our eyes, Lord.
> Eyes and mouth stand so open and void,
> Lord.
> We have drunk, Lord.
> The blood and the image that was in the
> blood, Lord.
>
> Pray, Lord.
> We are near.

This devastating poem appeared in 1959 in *Speech-Grille* (*Sprachgitter*). Celan is said to have composed the poem in his head while out walking one day and then written it down verbatim. The power of "Tenebrae" depends on the starkness of its language and the subtle variations within it. The first line of Felstiner's translation, "Near are we," exactly reflects the German syntax (*Nah sind wir*), unlike Hamburger's "We are near." This may seem a quibble, but the reversal of the adjective and the pronoun is crucial; when the phrase returns, particularly in the last line, the words' shift into the more usual order hammers home their irony more clearly and gives one the sense that the poem has come full circle. Felstiner's brusque vocabulary also seems more right for "Tenebrae" than Hamburger's more domesticated language. (The latter translates *greifbar* as "at hand" instead of the more graphic "graspable"—and "near and at hand" sounds like a redundancy.) Neither translator manages to reproduce the angry internal rhyme at the end of the line that begins "Eyes and mouth" (in the original, *Augen und Mund stehn so offen und leer, Herr*), but Felstiner comes close with the slant rhyme "void, Lord." In this translation Felstiner is at his best—faithful to the original in both word choice and syntax, allowing the voice of the German poem to echo in the background. Though there is nothing comparable to Celan's pun in the Dickinson poem to "give back" to the original, Felstiner has allowed nothing to distract from the images' drastic simplicity.

SINCE FELSTINER MANAGES to achieve so many aspects of translation so well, it is all the more frustrating that he occasionally takes unjustifiable liberties. One especially painful example of this is his translation of "Deathfugue," which was anthologized over and over in postwar Germany as the quintessential "poem after Auschwitz." As with "Tenebrae," there are many good things about the translation, foremost among them, again, Felstiner's generally straightforward language. The first stanza gives a good sense of it:

> Black milk of daybreak we drink it
> at evening
> we drink it at midday and morning
> we drink it at night
> we drink and we drink
> we shovel a grave in the air there
> you won't lie too cramped
> A man lives in the house he plays with
> his vipers he writes
> he writes when it grows dark to Deutschland your golden hair Margareta
> he writes it and steps out of doors and
> the stars are all sparkling he whistles
> his hounds to come close
> he whistles his Jews into rows has them



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shovel a grave in the ground
he commands us play up for the dance

By sticking to English cognates of the German words when possible, Felstiner effectively reproduces Celan's clipped, almost waltzlike three-beat rhythm (though the precision of the German does not really come through). His word choice is generally on the mark: "a grave in the air" seems better for *ein Grab in den Lüften* than does Hamburger's unintentionally lighthearted "a grave in the breezes"; translating *Schlangen* as "vipers" rather than "snakes" or "serpents" allows English assonance to stand in for German alliteration—a fair trade; and, again, keeping things simple avoids the awkwardness of Hamburger's "we drink it at noon in the morning."

BUT FELSTINER'S DECISION not to translate *Deutschland*, as if it were a sacred word that would lose its meaning when ripped from the original language, is deeply troubling. As he pointed out in the biography, Felstiner is not the first to have made this choice. But it is worth remembering that in German *Deutschland* does not have the sinister ring that it has acquired in English. While most Americans will have learned the word in connection with the Nazi anthem, the fact remains that for Germans it is also an everyday word, no more or less inherently shocking than "United States" or "Cameroon" or "Kazakhstan." Not to translate the word implies that it were somehow too horrible to translate, which gives it an unnecessary jolt of metaphysical meaning, a kind of negative sacralization, that is foreign to the original poem. It is also wrong to introduce a false polyglottism into Celan's early work.

The untranslated *Deutschland* is the tip of the "Deathfugue" iceberg. As the poem ominously winds on, repeating the elements in the first stanza in a perverse variation on counterpoint, Felstiner takes one of its recurring lines and gradually reverts the words into German: "Death is a master from Deutschland" becomes "Death is a master aus Deutschland," then "Death is ein Meister aus Deutschland," and finally "der Tod ist ein Meister aus Deutschland." From here there is no going back; and Felstiner leaves the poem's final couplet, "dein goldenes Haar Margarete/ dein aschenes Haar Sulamith" in German as well. Felstiner's version has its admirers, notably Robert Hass, who has written that "the effect [of the German] is harrowing and it allows us to feel, in the final lines, the force of the poem's final word, which is a Hebrew name." But why would a Hebrew word be less conspicuous in an English sentence?

"By veering more and more to the original, my verse gets a ring of truth, an identity with verse written by Paul Celan," Felstiner explains, somewhat self-congratulatingly, in the biography. "In this gradual reversion, unavailable to German readers, we re-enter the 'darkness of death-bringing speech.'" It is disturbing however that Felstiner views as particularly praiseworthy the fact that the experience of reading his version is "unavailable" to speakers of the original poem's language. For the purpose of poetic translation is to reproduce, as much as possible, not only the words and the phrasing but also the overall experience of reading a poem. This is exactly why Celan's beautiful Dickinson translation is ultimately a failure: by foregrounding Death, he gives the German reader a misleading impression of one of the poem's central aspects. Reading poetry in translation requires a great leap of faith on the part of the reader, faith that the translator has done his or her best to faithfully render the diction, the style, and also the meaning—in however many ways that word is understood—of the original. The reader needs to be assured that the translator, for whatever reasons of his or her own, has not simply used the original as a point of departure. Felstiner's so-called reversion to German is just such a breach of this contract with the reader, a flashy device that serves only to turn the reader's attention away from the poet and toward the translator, which is exactly where it should not be.

Moreover, the idea that the translation gets a "ring of truth" through its identity with the German implies that the best translation is no translation at all—a defeatist appraisal of the translator's work if ever there was one. Yet sometimes one has the feeling that this is what Felstiner believes, at least with regard to Celan. Both the biography and the editorial commentary in *Selected Poems* are suffused with the sense that Celan's words possess a scriptural aura, a talismanic quality—that, like the mythical pre-Babel language or the words of mystical texts, these poems fuse exactly with their meaning and are really unparaphrasable, untranslatable. In the biography, Felstiner includes a timeline of a sort charting Celan's life; but instead of naming the events that occurred each year, he simply cites a line or two from poems written during that year. Thus 1948 is represented by "It's time the stone consented to bloom" and 1968 by "Illegibility of this/world. Everything doubled." At first glance, these snippets are nothing worse than sound bites; but the truth is that their decontextualization inhibits understanding, and thus furthers the impression of Celan's numinous incomprehensibility.

WORSE, FELSTINER'S BELIEF in the profound significance of every leakage from the poet's pen also leads him to commit what can only be described as a travesty. As he shamelessly relates in the introduction to *Selected Poems*, Gisèle Celan-Lestrange, the poet's widow, allowed Felstiner to examine Celan's library. There, late one night, he found a volume of Kafka's stories. Seeing Celan's handwritten notes in the back, he realized the poet had been reading the book during one of his stays in a psychiatric clinic—and that he had written in it "some terrifying pained scrawlings. Hardly daring to, I nonetheless copied them down."

Just then Gisèle entered the room. Upon discovering Felstiner with this book, she asked him to return it to the shelf. "After seven more years of work... I doubted that I could, or rather that I should, publish those naked scrawlings, however arresting and revealing," Felstiner admits. "Even when I'd finished composing my biographical account of Celan, I kept putting off asking Gisèle for permission. Then, tragically and to my shock, she died of cancer.... Finally, I decided that a genuine account needed to include [the scrawlings]. In 1994, ten years after lighting upon them, I asked the Celans' son, Eric, for permission and he kindly agreed."

One wonders whether Eric Celan was informed of his mother's opposition. But more to the point, why on earth did Felstiner, despite his own doubts about the propriety of his act, feel the need to expose Celan in this way? "These utterances belong to the poet's psychic ground, the dark behind the mirror," Felstiner explains. "What's more, in the critical languages of German and Hebrew, they speak for two core motives, the motives that—to my mind, at least—unite in driving Paul Celan's most idiosyncratic writing." But the "utterances" in question—a phrase expressing uncertain hope for human solidarity, and the one-line Hebrew prayer known as the *Shema*—are hardly unique to the endpaper that they are scribbled on. Nor do they add any new information (those same "two core motives" of Celan's work are represented elsewhere, obviously), or introduce any new ideas. Their presence on the flyleaf of the Kafka book merely indicates that they passed through the poet's mind at a moment of great difficulty.

Felstiner's violation of Celan's privacy—twice: first in the biography and then again in his book—sheds no light on the poet. It is the consequence, rather, of Felstiner's fetishization of Celan's writing,

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of his conviction that it is important to preserve all the words that Celan ever jotted down, even though they may not have been intended for public consumption. Felstiner needs to be reminded that his subject is a human being, not a god, and that his poetry is just that—poetry, not the vatic revelation of spiritual truth. The fact that Celan showed an interest in Jewish mysticism does not make him a mystic or his words mystical.

III.

"MOSTLY CELAN'S LYRICS will reach readers who keep their minds peeled, without the sort of interpreting my critical biography offers," Felstiner observes, somewhat awkwardly, in the introduction to *Selected Poems*. He is attempting to explain why, after having earlier argued so strenuously for the necessity of a biography that was also a textual study that was also a translation, he has come to the conclusion that a translation on its own can be effective after all. But Felstiner may have been right the first time. While "Tenebrae" and "Deathfugue" are, in their own way, models of minimalist clarity, Celan's later poems can be virtually impenetrable, at least without the help of detailed glosses.

During the mid- and late 1960s, Celan's grip on his mental health was growing ever shakier. Thrown into a deep depression by false plagiarism charges brought against him by the widow of Yvan Goll, a poet whom he had translated and befriended, he would struggle with psychiatric problems throughout the last years of his life. The poet Nelly Sachs, a close friend, suffered similarly; but as the years went on Celan, whose mental problems forced him to separate from his wife, felt increasingly isolated. He spent much of this period in a psychiatric clinic, treated with drugs and electroshock therapy, about which Celan chillingly remarked to a friend that "they are doing experiments on me."

Though this period was one of creative fertility for Celan—he produced five volumes of poetry (two published posthumously) in five years—it was perhaps inevitable that his late poems, which grow ever more radical in their imagery and their use of language, would be viewed by some critics as surreal or, worse, as the ravings of a madman. This both pained and angered Celan, who fought angrily against the idea of his poems' inaccessibility. "My recent book [*Threadsuns*] is seen everywhere as encoded," he lamented in 1968. "Believe me—every word was written in direct relation to reality. But no, this they just will not and will not understand." My poetry is "not in the least hermetic," he chided his translator Hamburger.

Alas, this was not quite the case. Writing in these pages five years ago, Michael André Bernstein responded to Celan's statement thus: "But Celan's later style *is* hermetic, almost in the technical sense of summoning arcane knowledge and powers through word-magic. There are clearly poems whose meaning is recoverable only through intimate familiarity with Celan's private reading matter and the most circumstantial details of his daily routine. Moments of incomprehension are not always signs of a resistance to Celan's originality, nor need they bespeak a refusal to admit the gravity of his themes." Bernstein is right. And Felstiner himself seems to be of two minds as to how to deal with Celan's hermeticism.

In the biography, Felstiner goes on for pages at a time examining the events in Celan's life, the books that he was reading, anything that will elucidate a poem. In *Selected Poems*, he goes to the opposite extreme, glossing the poems with the most minimal of endnotes—a brief definition for a word left untranslated, an identification of a name. And, paradoxically, each approach only deepens the sense of the poems' impenetrability. Consider "Near, in the aorta's arch," a poem from *Threadsuns* (*Fadensonnen*), which appeared in 1968. Here it is in its entirety, in Felstiner's translation:

> Near, in the aorta's arch,
> in bright blood:
> the brightword.
>
> Mother Rachel
> weeps no more.
> Carried across now
> all of the weeping.
>
> Still, in the coronary arteries,
> unbinded:
> Ziv, that light.

One immediately hears echoes of "Tenebrae" in the opening of the poem and its blood-soaked imagery. Without more information, however, a closer approach is impossible. Felstiner's note to the poem in this volume identifies "Ziv" as "Hebrew for divine effulgence, a term from Judaic mysticism." This, the merest kernel of what merited a six-page explication in the biography, hardly brings us closer. In the earlier book, Felstiner describes in detail Celan's activities of May 10, 1967, the date of the poem's creation, when Celan was receiving shock therapy. He wrote the poem on the inside front cover of a handbook of human physiology, in which he found, naturally, a description of the coronary arteries and the aortic arch. At the same time he was reading Gershom Scholem's *On the Mystical Shape of the Godhead*, a discussion of some central concepts in Kabbalah. As Felstiner rather clumsily puns, "something sparked" between the two texts.

ACCORDING TO SCHOLEM'S account, Rachel is a personification of the *Shekhinah*, or the presence of God "indwelling" in the world. When the people of Israel go off into exile, she weeps, pleading for God's mercy. So what does it mean that this long-suffering figure is no longer weeping? In Celan's copy of Scholem's book, Felstiner discovers the jottings of a Yiddish folk song:

> *Vet di mamme Rokhl veynen*
> *Vet Meshiekh nit mer kenen*
> *Dos geveyn aribertrogn*
>
> (When Mother Rachel weeps
> the Messiah no longer can
> Endure the lament)

In Celan's poem, Rachel "weeps no more" because the Messiah has come; her weeping is not "carried across" (to where?), as Felstiner would have it, but, following the Yiddish, "endured." And the word unspoken in the first stanza is finally pronounced at the end: "Ziv, that light." Scholem's description of the *Shekhinah* includes the statement that God's presence "may be manifested in a supernatural glow of light, known as the 'radiance (*ziv*) of the *Shekhinah*'." Explaining why he does not translate the word, Felstiner remarks: "In a word like Ziv, letter and spirit are not separable, as they must be for translation to occur. Especially in the Kabbalah, God's speech created the world—'Let there be light'—and as that speech was Hebrew, the 'brightword' Ziv names what no other word can."

Leaving aside the fact that this reasoning is perilously close to Felstiner's justification for not translating *Deutschland*—Scholem himself had no compunction about giving a translation for the kabbalistic term—the important point is that Celan's poem is too obscure to stand alone, unexplicated or with the helplessly gesturing endnote identifying "Ziv" (as if it were the only element of the poem requiring explanation) that accompanies it in *Selected Poems*. In order to reconstruct the poem, we need to know not only Celan's influences over the course of his lifetime but the particular texts he was reading at the time of the poem's creation, since it is the peculiar juxtaposition of the physiology textbook, a single line from Scholem on the *Shekhinah*, and a Yiddish folksong that has produced "Near, in the aorta's arch." Thus the act of "reading" the poem comes to have little to do with read-

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ing as we generally know it, consisting instead in a scholarly assembling of various shards from Celan's archive.

As PIERRE JORIS'S translation of *Threadsuns* demonstrates, this holds true for much of the rest of the volume as well. Like Felstiner, Joris insists that the poems should be read as what was for Celan a very real and "lethal" representation of the mental landscape, "not only Celan's ... but ours too." Still, even Joris concedes that the poems are "inward-folding, self-absorbed," tersely fractured. Some, such as "Near, in the aorta's arch," can be reconstituted based on details from Celan's life, but others are not—and, as Joris would have it, need not be. His bilingual volume preserves the poems of *Threadsuns* in Celan's original order. (They were intended to be read as five cycles.) "The reader should not then ... break the volume down into individual poems that may, due to surface elements such as concretely shared outside referents ... seem more 'understandable,' 'readable,' etc. What is required of the reader ... is to weave the threads of the individual poems into a text that is the cycle or book of poems. The poet gives us the threads; we have to do the weaving—an invitation to a new kind of reading."

On the surface this idea seems fair. But once one attempts to put it into practice, it is quickly evident that it is quite difficult to approach a cycle of poems as a whole without an understanding of the individual parts that constitute it. These poems, some only a few lines long, combine the enigma of haiku with neologistic language experiments reminiscent of e.e. cummings. Here is one, in its entirety:

> The Trace of a Bite in the nowhere.
>
> It too
> you have to fight,
> from here on out.

Here is another:

> Dew. And I lay with you, thou,
> in the rubble,
> a mushy moon
> pelted us with answer,
>
> we crumbled apart
> we brittled back together:
>
> the Lord broke the bread,
> the bread broke the Lord.

It is possible, of course, to conjecture all sorts of meanings, and to layer them onto the poems as strips of papier-mâché on a piñata. But no interpretation feels inevitable. Joris's characterization of the poems as "inward-folding" seems right in this context. Though they are written in standard German, they speak a language that only the poet can understand. Wisely, Joris has kept his translations quite literal; in poems as compact as these, there is little room for fancy footwork.

IV.

FANCY FOOTWORK, unfortunately, is exactly what we get in the unfortunately titled *Glottal Stop*, a selection of 101 late Celan poems translated by Nikolai Popov and Heather McHugh. Popov and McHugh's goal is to provide translations of poems that have been until now unavailable in English; and these, not coincidentally, are by and large the most difficult and most obscure poems from the late volumes *Threadsuns* and *Breathturn* (*Atemwende*). (Unfortunately, in making previous obscurity a criterion for a poem's inclusion, the authors seem not to have counted on the simultaneous appearance of Joris's translation of *Threadsuns*.)

Popov and McHugh present their work as being more about Celan's poetry itself than about translation. In selecting the poems that appear in their book, they chose to restrict themselves to poems "for which we could find, in English, sufficiently rich or opportune poetic resources to justify publication.... Nothing short of extraordinary results in [English] seemed sufficient homage to Celan." Though they acknowledge the impossibility of reproducing in English Celan's "tragic relation" to the German language, their aim is to create poems that follow his "intentional mode." (They are invoking Walter Benjamin's theory of translation.) "Everything in a poem is literal," they write,

> that is, made of letters, blanks, and their interrelationships on the page, and the literal is everything. Precisely this omnipresence of the letter and the depth of Celan's probings into the matrix of his 'original' language prohibit naïve replications of line or meaning. In short, we often sought higher levels of fidelity than those of the word, the line, or the individual poem: Working on a fairly large body of poems allowed us to recreate, where possible in English, effects that seemed characteristic of his art as a whole.

It is hard to say exactly wherein these "higher levels of fidelity" consist, but Popov and McHugh use them as justification for not including the original German, saying that scholars will be able to look up the texts easily and serious readers "will have no objection to focusing on a poem's presence and integrity." But Popov and McHugh defeat their own purpose with their notes to the poems, which are unbelievably obscure and jargon-filled. The notes further frustrate the reader by referring to the German texts of the poems, which are not here. One who reads straight through, focusing on the poems' "presence and integrity," as intended, will build up an impression of Celan's layers of images of plants and brightnesses and voices, but such a reader will not actually understand a thing. And one who pauses periodically to consult the notes will be drawn down a rabbit's hole of references and arcana for which the English texts are not sufficient preparation.

AND YET POPOV and McHugh are the most inventive of Celan's recent translators, and their language is almost always more dynamic than Felstiner's or Joris's. A particular tour de force is their version of the cryptic "Threesome, Foursome," one of Celan's only mid-career poems to follow a strict scheme of meter and rhyme. The German of the original is clipped and regular, without a single wasted syllable. Felstiner utterly flubs this in his translation. Here are the first three stanzas, in his version:

> Curly mousetail, mousetail, curly,
> here's the housecat, hunting early.
>
> Now's the time, and it's your time now,
> time for chatting with my rhyme now.
>
> Here's a mouth and here's its quelling,
> here are words, hear them rebelling.

Where did Felstiner's housecat come from? Certainly not from Celan, whose lines play with the German word for spearmint, *Krauseminze*, the components of which literally signify "curly mint." Popov and McHugh's rendering is much more sensible, managing both to stay closer to the meaning and to capture the singsong rhythm (the form Celan uses is based on Romanian folk song):

> In the dooryard, puckered mint,
> you pucker back, you leaf a hint.
>
> Mind this hour, it is your time,
> Mine the mouth and yours the rhyme.
>
> Mine's the mouth, though it is still,
> Full of words that will not fill.

Still, in their search for readability Popov and McHugh sometimes tend to oversimplify, wrapping up a convoluted German clause in a deceptively easy-to-read English expression. At times their colloquialisms are downright jarring:

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Terror in Israel
Can the peace process be saved?

The world is once again confronted with the frenzy of Arab-Muslim terror. It has found its crudest and most disturbing expression in the upheavals in Israel, the well-orchestrated "second intifada," and in the suicide attack on the USS COLE, in which seventeen American sailors died and scores were gravely wounded.

What are the facts?

A history of terror. Since that famous handshake on the White House lawn seven years ago, there have been many suicide bombings and other murderous attacks on Jews in Israel. Not content with that, the Muslim-Arab murderers have perpetrated outrages against Israel and against other western targets all over the world. For instance, they bombed and totally destroyed two U.S. embassies in Africa, with grievous loss of life. They bombed the World Trade Center in New York and were barely prevented from bombing the Lincoln and Holland Tunnels, the U.N. building and the subway. Arab-Muslim terrorists car bombed and totally destroyed the Jewish Community Center in Buenos Aires, the Israeli Embassy in the same city, and bombed and destroyed the Israeli Embassy in London. Hundreds of people were killed. There can be no question that Arab-Muslim terrorists were behind the PanAm flight 103 plane explosion (whether they were Libyans or Palestinians, does it make any difference?), the blowing up of the U.S. Air Force barracks in Saudi Arabia, in which nineteen Air Force personnel died, and in literally hundreds of other acts of terror. The Arab-Muslim states were in all cases conspicuous by their unhelpfulness, stiff-arming all efforts by Israel and the United States to find and punish the culprits. Without exception, all these terror acts, including the murder of two U.S. diplomats in Khartoum (Sudan), were explicitly authored by Yassir Arafat. That is a man, who until too long ago, was classified by the U.S. State Department as an international terrorist and was precluded from entering the United States. Now, thanks mostly to deluded Israeli leftists and "peace activists", he has emerged as a recipient of the Nobel Peace Prize (surely one of recent history's most outrageous jokes) and as a "statesman" who is received with honor in the capitals and chancelleries of the world.

> "For peace to be possible, the Arab world has to develop a totally different mind set. It has to fully accept to live side-by-side with the Jewish State of Israel."

Any pretext suffices. The world is comfortable in believing that the rage of the Arab-Muslims is directed toward Israel and that peace would reign in the Middle East and the world if, by some unholy miracle, Israel would agree to all Arab requests or, better yet, disappear altogether. That calamity would cause great rejoicing in the Arab-Muslim world. But it would really only be the beginning. The real enemy, the "great Satan" is the Western world, and especially the United States. Everything we believe in -- democracy, justice, human rights, freedom of religion (especially!) is anathema to the Arab-Muslims. But, of course, the destruction of the State of Israel is the primary and immediate goal, not just of the Palestinian Arabs, but of all Arab Muslims and of the non-Arab Iranians. Instead of following the agreements of the Oslo Accord, Arafat goads his followers with blood-curdling speeches into ever-increasing violence, urging them to "liberate Palestine" (that means all of Israel) and Jerusalem by jihad (holy war), "by blood and by fire," and to become martyrs for this sacred cause.

Any pretext to violence suffices. Now it is a visit to the Temple Mount by Ariel Sharon. Before that it was the opening of an archaeological tunnel that offended the sensitivities of the Palestinian Arabs. Then it was the construction of residences by Israeli Jews on land that they owned. And often no pretext at all is needed. Terror is committed out of sheer hatred for the Jews and the desire to kill as many of them as possible. And that is the nub of the problem. Only the most naive can believe that the Palestinian Arabs (or the rest of the Arab-Muslim world) can be placated by the Israelis bringing "sacrifices for peace." The Arabs will not be satisfied with any piece of land. Even if the Israeli Jews were prepared to hand over the entire land of Israel to the Arabs and only retain, perhaps, the enclave of Tel Aviv, it would not suffice. The elimination of any Jewish vestige is the inalterable goal. The presence of Jews in the Middle East is an unacceptable thorn in the side of the Arabs -- an insult that must be avenged and eliminated. But, of course, no peace can come about until that attitude and that mindset change.

What does this mean for the so-called "peace process"? The Israelis, especially under the leadership of Ehud Barak, have fulfilled every obligation undertaken in the Oslo Accord -- including many additional concessions that were not required of them. Arafat and his people have fulfilled none of their obligations, including the most basic one, namely to abstain from violence and terror. They have not amended their infamous charter, which calls for the destruction of the State of Israel. They have created an army of over 40,000 men, with missiles, artillery and anti-tank weapons, totally prohibited under the Oslo Accord. Can the "peace process" be saved? At this point, and in view of recent happenings, the regretful answer has to be that it doesn't seem likely for any foreseeable future. Since all Arab children are imbued from first grade with hatred for the Jews and with the desire to become martyrs for their cause, that would seem to be a long way off.

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Celan certainly never wrote anything like the phrase "back in the saddle." In "White noises," the introduction of references to the Internet in the last stanza is bizarrely anachronistic: "Audible-inaudible/all the/shadowstoppers/logging on/at all the/shadowlinks." And surely Celan is turning uncomfortably in his grave at the translation of, in the poem "Haut Mal," *du beheiligst/mein Glied* as "you/consecrate/my cock." (Joris has the more literal and more decorous—and more ridiculous—"you hallow/my member.")

More oddly, in a translation of poems of which the untitled originals are often known by their first lines, some of which consist of just one word, Popov and McHugh's freedom with the form of the poems—as in Celan's translation of Dickinson—produces problems. One would think that the translation of a poem that opens with "Truth" (*Die Wahrheit*) would want to keep this important word at the top, but Popov and McHugh banish it to the end of the second line. "Here are the industrious" completely rewrites the original, replacing its list structure with the repetition of "here" at the beginning of each section (it appears in the German exactly once, in Popov/McHugh nine times). And, perhaps most oddly of all, the translators steer clear of Celan's trademark compound neologisms, often breaking them into several words or phrases.

The results of their technique can be seen in the following poem:

> Naked under death leaves,
> their bodies both unsullied,
> both defaced.
>
> Pulled up on shore by
> the whitest root of
> the whitest tree.

Joris's (clunkily literal) version:

> Of Both: the de-scarred bodies,
> of both: the deathleaf over their
> nakedness, of both: the de-realized
> faces.
>
> Pulled onto land by
> the whitest root of
> the whitest tree.

Joris gives an idea of the poem's torturously convoluted syntax, particularly in the first stanza, with "both" in an awkward genitive and complex noun and verb formations. Popov and McHugh's smoothed-over version contains no sense of either the convolution or the fragmented, cut-and-pasted verbs. "Unsullied" for *entnarbte*, a made-up word syntactically the opposite of *vernarbte*, "scarred over," is incomprehensible. The "deathleaf" is singular. And Joris's "de-realized faces" captures the sense of *entwirklichtes Antlitz* (literally something like "un-made-real face") much better than "defaced," a strange pun. In comparison with Joris, Popov and McHugh's poem appears almost dumbed-down. It is too pretty; it makes too much sense. One understands something, but that something is not Celan.

IN THE END, though, it is hard to blame Popov and McHugh for wanting to render Celan's late poems understandable. Why not smooth out "de-realized faces" into "defaced"? Few readers will be any the wiser. But this begs the question of why Celan would write a line such as "de-realized faces" to begin with. Why did he engage in such convolutions of syntax? Why did he mix in everything from Hebrew to Middle High German?

It is not enough to say that "every word was written in direct relation to reality." The question remains: to whom is he representing this reality? Who else speaks Celan's language? Like Martin Buber and Franz Rosenzweig's German translation of the Hebrew Bible, Celan's poetry was cursed with the loss of much of its audience even before its creation. By 1970, the year in which he wrote his last poem, there simply did not exist that many people for whom the words *ziv* and *ashrei* had any meaning in the context of German verse.

But this is almost irrelevant. The truth is that Celan's language, at least during his last decade, was always essentially private. That is its very severe limitation. It has even been said that Celan's poetry is "translated into German." To appreciate his poems fully requires a command of half a dozen languages, the incredibly diverse assortment of texts he took in over his lifetime, and even the events of his life, major and minor. To understand Celan, in other words, one has to have been Celan.

When I was in graduate school, a group of us spent an evening discussing Celan's work. A Russian instructor teased out the references to Mandelstam. A professor of Romance languages translated the Spanish and French. A divinity student who read Hebrew and Greek explained the biblical references. It took the dozen or so of us several hours to even come close to deciphering two poems. When it was over, I had the sense that we, like the rabbit in Zeno's paradox, had traveled a few steps but were still an infinity away from our destination.

Is it possible to translate a poetry that veers so drastically toward incomprehensibility? Joris responds by stubbornly reproducing each tangled word, maintaining fidelity and thus befuddling the reader. Popov and McHugh iron it out and thus lose the sense of the work's elusiveness that is fundamental to the experience of reading Celan. Felstiner hides behind Celan's own refusal to elucidate his work: "With poems or lines I can't quite understand, I gladly pass them along to the reader within the full stream of Celan's writing," he writes ungrammatically. "After all, Celan himself in his recitals refrained utterly from comment, enunciating only the poem's words and lines."

Celan's poetry still awaits a translator who can come to it as an equal, who has the skill and the grace and the judiciousness to allow it to sing when it sings and to stutter when it stutters. But even such a translator will be able to illuminate only so much of a poetry that stubbornly seeks the shadows. In the words of a line from *Threadsuns*: "All your seals broken open? Never." ■

To My Father on the Anniversary of His Death

What a grizzly day, gray and drizzly,
sky the same drained uncolor as your deathbed face,

today's light stuck on the other side
of a dense cloud dome baffling the March-third sun:

I fill clear glass vases with daffodils
cut while wandering the yard and neighborhood,

their stems green blurs inside my hands,
their petals like flimsy flames barely lighting the way

as I look for you, or the memory of you,
anywhere in the deep late winter of this underworld.

Michael McFee

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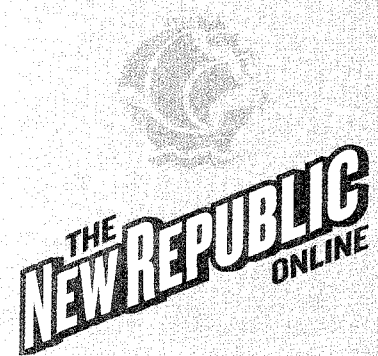

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JUST A FEW SCATTERED MEMories remain from my seventh-grade class trip to Tallahassee: falling asleep while state senators debated water-management bills, meeting the lieutenant governor and brazenly sitting in his chair, running my fingers over the dimple (from a bullet, not a voting stylus) that an unknown gunman once planted in the Supreme Court's aluminum doors. But what lingers most is my overall impression of the state capital. I lived with my family in South Florida, and most of my neighbors and classmates were transplanted Northeasterners like us. Culturally, Tallahassee didn't just feel like the capital of a different state—it felt like the capital of a different universe. I remember wincing at sickly presweetened iced tea and taking note of the ubiquitous Confederate flags, a rarity in our corner of Florida. And I remember that the dozen or so public officials who greeted our group spoke with a Southern drawl as foreign to us as our Brooklynese must have sounded to them.

GEOGRAPHY HAD A LOT TO DO WITH it. Tallahassee is just 20 miles south of the Georgia border; driving to New Orleans, Birmingham, or even Atlanta takes less time than the trek to Miami. But the Southern flavor of Florida's capital also reflected the fact that the state's political power in the 1980s resided where it always had: with the white Southern establishment that lived in the state's northern tier. The original Floridians (or, rather, the ones who pushed out the Native Americans, Spaniards, and West Indians in the nineteenth century) were former Alabamans, Georgians, and Virginians who settled in rural towns like Jacksonville, Ocala, and Pensacola. They brought with them a Southern style of life and, naturally, a Southern style of politics. When it came time to secede from the Union, Florida was third in line, right after South Carolina and Mississippi. After Reconstruction, Florida used Jim Crow to disenfranchise newly freed blacks, just like the rest of the Deep South.

OF COURSE, FLORIDA WAS A DRAMATically different place by the time my seventh-grade class visited Tallahassee, thanks in no small part to us newcomers living in and around Miami. Yet political power had not followed the population downstate. While the waves of new Floridians had keen interest in various national and international issues—Social Security, Israel, or Cuba—they were relatively indifferent when it came to state affairs. What's more, since the Northeastern retirees and Jewish transplants were predominantly Democratic and the Cuban immigrants were predominantly Republican, they tended to cancel one another out in statewide elections. They also diluted the voting power of African Americans, who had sunk from nearly half the population during Reconstruction to about 15 percent in 1980. Together, these factors allowed the Southern establishment to keep its hold on power—which meant politics in Florida evolved in more or less the same way it did in the rest of the Deep South. While some white conservatives—the so-called Blue Dog Democrats—kept their party registration out of habit, most eventually switched to the GOP, bringing with them control over state government. In 1996, Republicans seized both houses of the Florida legislature for the first time since Reconstruction. They've held it ever since.

WHAT'S MOST REMARKABLE ABOUT this year's presidential race in Florida is not that Al Gore probably won it but rather *how* he probably won it. The Democrats who won statewide elections in the 1970s, '80s, and '90s—Bob Graham, Reubin Askew, Jimmy Carter, and Bill Clinton—did so by courting Blue Dog Democrats and appealing to Southern sensibilities. The late Governor Lawton Chiles, for example, would brag that he spoke "cracker" and refer to himself as a "he-coon." But Gore did just the opposite. As Florida State University's Lance deHaven-Smith demonstrates in a persuasive new paper on the 2000 election, Gore basically wrote off the "Southerner" vote, sewing together a coalition of almost everyone else: transplanted Jews, non-Cuban Hispanics, newly organized African Americans, and young suburban independents. Statewide, Gore's coalition turned out in such heavy numbers that it more than made up for his surprisingly weak showing among elderly voters, who—thanks to an apparent case of Clinton fatigue—actually went for George W. Bush by a slim margin.

YOU DON'T NEED A DOCTORATE IN sociology to grasp the implications: The Gore coalition includes the state's fastest growing population group (Hispanics) and a group that is finally realizing its true political potential (African Americans). The Republicans, by contrast, have no such reservoirs to tap. Most potential white Southern converts have already converted; modest gains among the elderly won't do the GOP much good over the long haul. The most likely source of new Republican voters would seem to be all those new-economy workers, who don't have strong partisan leanings. But Republicans are losing these voters to the Democrats over social issues like abortion and gun control (see "For Richer and Poorer," by John B. Judis, TNR, December 4). As deHaven-Smith notes, Republican registration in Florida peaked at 43 percent in 1996, then began declining; today, Democrats have a 350,000 registration edge. All this has national implications. If Florida's electoral votes had gone to Gore, his "corner" strategy—ceding the Deep South while carrying the Northeast and the West Coast, plus some of the Midwest—would have worked. For at least half a century, conventional wisdom has held that Democrats can't win nationally, just as they can't win in Florida, unless they make inroads among conservative Southern whites. Gore has blown that premise to bits.

I HAVEN'T BEEN BACK TO TALLAHASsee since that school trip 20 years ago. But I gather that things there haven't really changed. Although Florida is more diverse and moderate than ever, the conservative Southern establishment still runs the state capital. Indeed, the great public relations victory for the Republicans in the state legislature has been their portrayal of themselves, rather than the state Supreme Court, as the authentic representatives of Florida's popular will and identity. Yet, in both ethnicity and ideology, the seven justices more closely resemble the new Florida than do classic Southern conservatives such as House Speaker Tom Feeney. Feeney and company have held on to power over the last few years, thanks in part to gerrymandering and the crude use of leadership prerogatives, but eventually demographics will catch up with them. (Voting technology, too: The antiquated punch-card machines that were concentrated in heavily black and Jewish counties and helped depress this year's Democratic vote will almost certainly be replaced.) In 2002, with redistricting up for grabs, an outraged Democratic base may finally topple the legislature's Southern establishment and Governor Jeb Bush, too. So much the better. Florida stopped being part of the Deep South decades ago. It's about time Tallahassee did, too.

JONATHAN COHN

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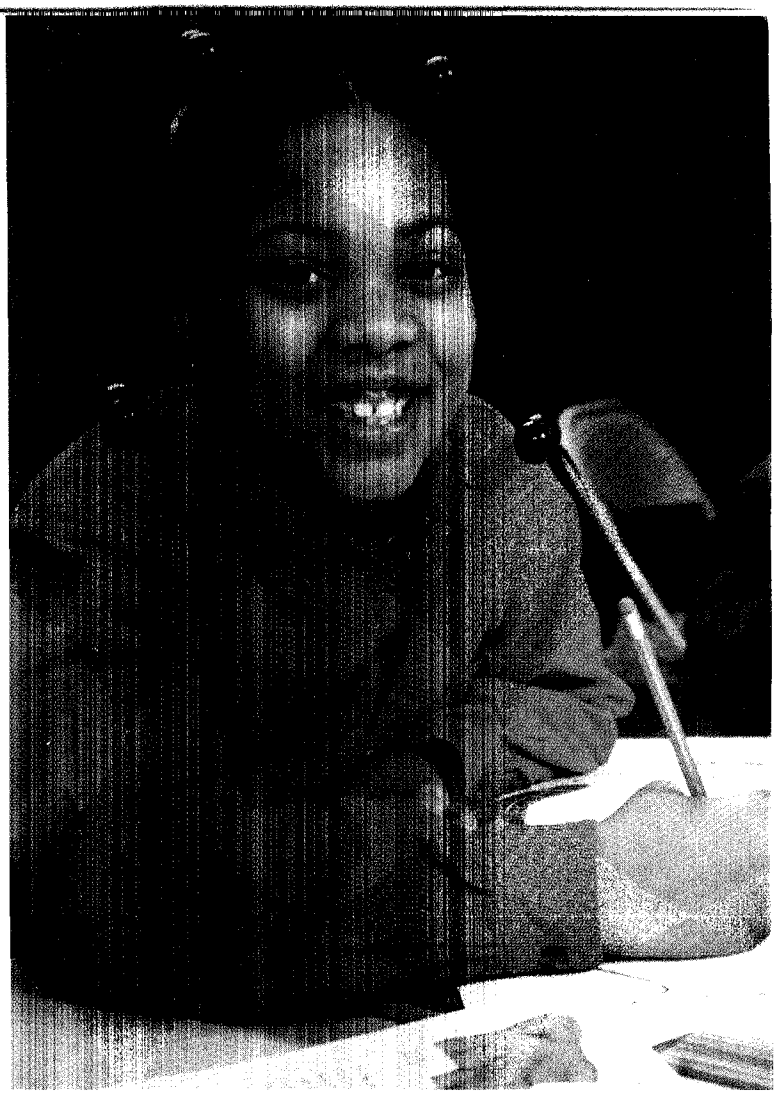
The Impact of School Choice on Public Schools



By Kaleem Caire, Executive Director
Black Alliance for Educational Options (BAEO)

Research shows that the academic achievement of many low-income, Black children improves when their parents can choose from a wide range of schools, including private schools.

Notwithstanding such benefits, what about students who continue to attend public schools? How are they and their schools affected by school choice?

Milwaukee's experience provides some answers. The Milwaukee Parental Choice Program (MPCP), now in its eleventh year, is America's oldest program of tax-supported school choice for low-income families. From 337 students at seven private schools in 1990, it has grown to 9,638 students at 103 private schools this year.

National and local journalists recently have offered independent observations about the MPCP's impact on the Milwaukee Public Schools (MPS).

On November 28, *The Milwaukee Journal Sentinel* cited changes in "the fundamental realities of how many [public] schools operate in Milwaukee." It described "decisions to make schools more independent, more innovative, more attuned to their communities — and, most of all, more popular with parents in an era where Milwaukee parents have more choices for publicly funded education than perhaps anyone in American history."

A November 15 *Journal Sentinel* story listed several MPS schools that had sought, and received, "more freedom to shape their programs than traditional [public] schools." The paper explained: "The schools clearly were aiming to reshape themselves to be more appealing in a more competitive school market."

Parental school choice is widespread — unless you're poor.

A tangible example of real change involves the decision by dozens of MPS schools to forego reliance on seniority in selecting new staff. With cooperation and support from the local teachers' union and a reform-oriented School Board, individual Milwaukee schools now may fill vacancies by interviewing applicants and choosing those who are most qualified.

Such positive developments are at odds with predictions of school choice critics. Their mantra is that public schools can't, or won't, respond favorably to an environment where parents have more options.

Further, claim these critics, school choice will harm public schools by "draining scarce" resources. In fact, however, an October 24 *USA Today* analysis of the Milwaukee situation shows no financial "drain." From 1990 to 1999, the paper found that real MPS spending grew 25%, while enrollment was up 8%. In other words, spending grew at a rate *three times faster than enrollment.* Some "drain."

USA Today also reported on the percentage of fourth grade MPS students scoring at or above proficiency levels on statewide tests. *Between 1997-98 and 1999-00, when the choice program grew rapidly, the scores of MPS students rose substantially.* In 1997-98, fewer than half of fourth graders were proficient in reading, math, science, and social studies. By last year, a majority of MPS fourth graders achieved proficiency in *all four categories.*

Milwaukee's story suggests that benefits from school choice extend well beyond the immediate group of students whose parents have a chance to choose from more schools.

baeo
Black Alliance for Educational Options

for more information go to: www.schoolchoiceinfo.org

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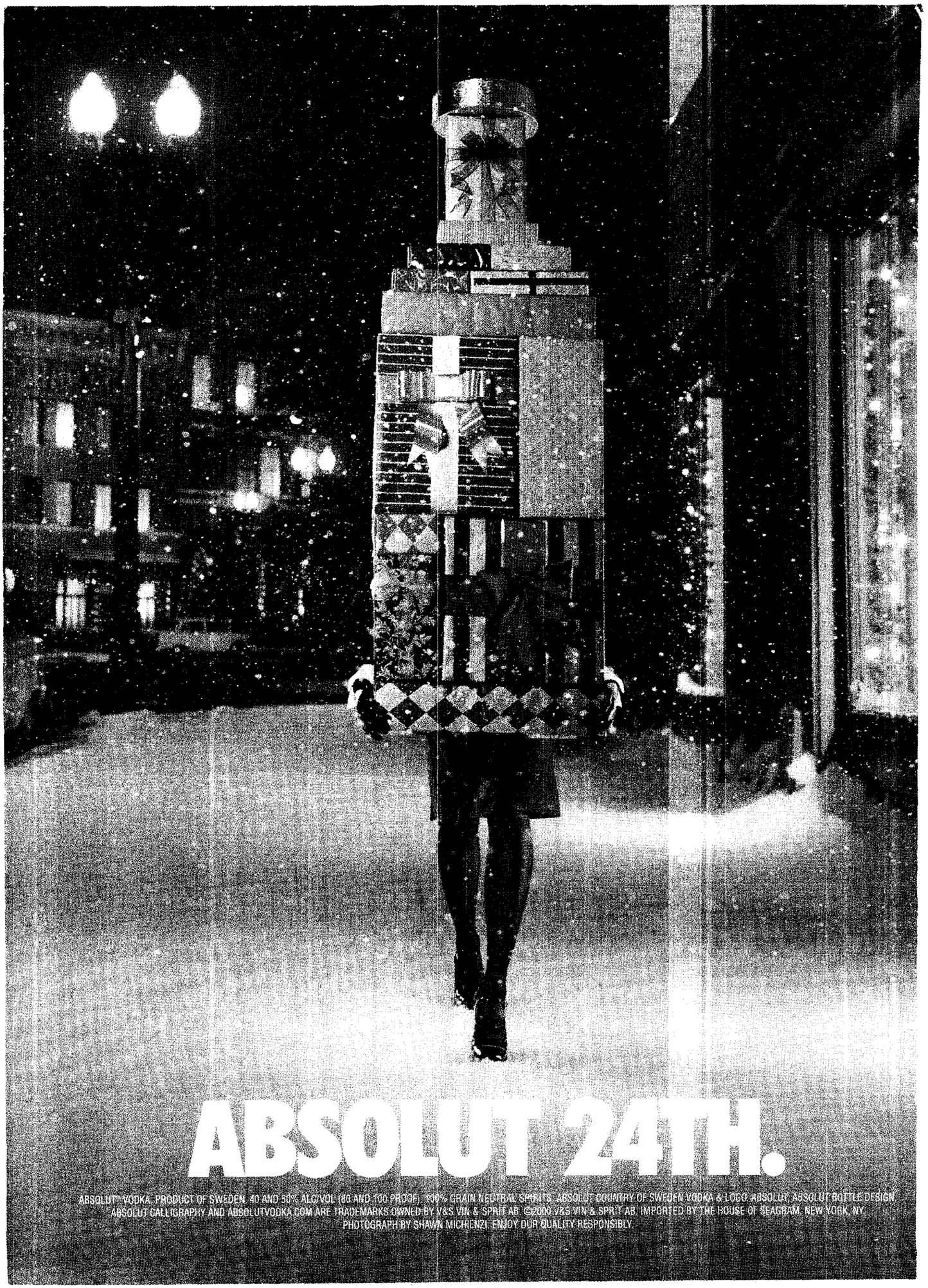

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